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Christians and Jews urge government to prosecute war criminals

TIVO INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH RESEARCH

A Jewish man is forced to wear the Star of David as identification during the Second World War. Canadian Jews want any former Nazi war criminals living in Canada brought to justice.

Alan Doerksen

TORONTO — For the first time in Canada, Christian and Jewish groups have gotten together to ask the federal government to take stronger action in bringing to justice former war criminals living in Canada.

On May 5, leaders of the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC), the Anglican Church, the Christian Reformed Church, the United Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the World Sikh Organization of Canada met with Justice Minister Allan Rock at Anglican Church offices in Toronto.

Bernie Farber, community relations director for CJC, is satisfied with the results of the meeting with Rock. "It was a historical meeting," he asserts. Rock and the federal justice department have "done more on this issue in the past 18 months than governments have done over the past 40 years."

A common morality

Speaking at a press conference after the meeting, Rock expressed his own and the government's concern over this issue.

"Those who took part in the meeting represent very different religions," said Rock. "However it is that we choose to worship our God, there is common to all religions a certain morality that requires justice. And in the case of war criminals of any era, that requires that governments and nations act in an effort to

See **ROCK** *page 2...*

Prisoner held in Iran trusted the Lord

Jeff Hoogendoorn

VICTORIA, B.C. — For over two months, American Dan Baumann knew nothing of what the next day would bring him. Perhaps it would be freedom from his Iranian prison cell. Perhaps it would be death. A fellow American had been imprisoned there for over four years. However, after only nine weeks, Baumann himself was free, a testimony, he says, of God's power and the prayers of people all over the world.

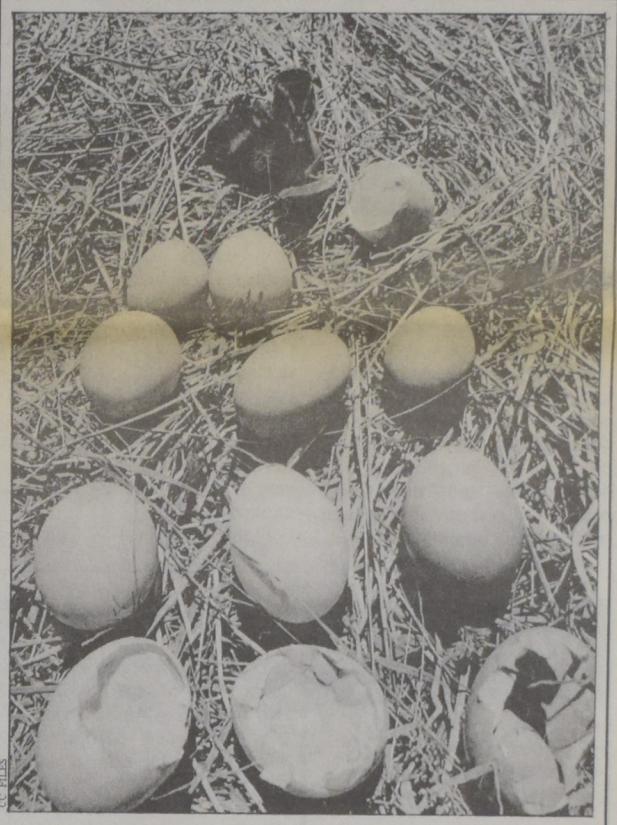
Baumann shared his story with a gathering on April 26 at the Victoria Baptist Church in Victoria, B.C. Baumann began the evening by acknowledging that he is "indebted to the Body of Christ" for all the prayers raised for him. He said that he is reminded of the stories of the Bible in which God set prisoners free. Shouts of "Amen" rang out when Baumann stated, "I am here to testify that it still happens today."

The mission field

Baumann began his mission work just after finishing high school in Los Angeles. He would go for one year — a test to see if it was for him. Then, after finishing university, Baumann began his full-time mission work in administration at an eye hospital in Afghanistan. This, he said, was preparation for working in the Muslim state of Turkmenistan, a place to which he felt God was calling him.

Around October 1996, Baumann and his partner had a vision to bring the Word of God to some of the 1.5 million Turkaman people living in Iran.

See **AMERICAN** *page 2...*



CC PILES

Prayer of the Little Duck

Dear God,
give us a flood of water.
Let it rain tomorrow and always.
Give us plenty of little slugs
and other luscious things to eat.
Protect all who quack
and everyone who knows how to swim.
Amen

Carmen Bernos de Gasztold
(translated from the French by Rumer Godden)

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News

Rock promises more government action

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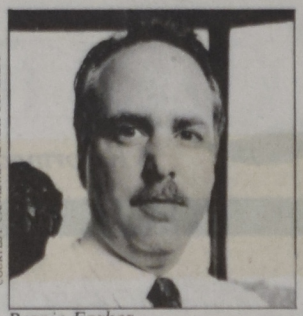
achieve justice.... That is something that we have attempted to do during the current government in relation to alleged Nazi war criminals." Rock added that his government has probably not done enough, but he expressed "a strong moral commitment to the effort, a recognition that action is needed, and a commitment to continue and to intensify the efforts we have made..."

Rock made the assurance that the government would be starting more court cases in the months ahead against alleged former war criminals.



COURTESY CANADIAN JEWISH CONGRESS

Bernie Farber

Only one

The Justice Ministry started Canada's war crimes investigation unit 10 years ago and has so far initiated four criminal trials of alleged former war criminals, but has won no convictions.

Only one person has been stripped of Canadian citizenship for Nazi war crimes in the past 50 years, reports the *Globe and Mail*. This was Jacob Luitjens, who was deported in the early 1990s to face a conviction in the Netherlands.

In 1995, Rock promised to make a stronger effort to deal with this issue. Since then, the government has been working on court proceedings to denaturalize and deport 12 people for misrepresenting their past as Nazi collaborators.

Two of the accused people have died. Of the 10 cases remaining, the first went to trial May 12.

When asked why the government is taking so long dealing with these court cases, Rock replied, "I think, in fairness, the person who is named in the proceeding has the perfect right to retain counsel, to get disclosure of the evidence, to prepare the defence and legal proceeding themselves. All those matters take time."

Rock has assured Canadian religious leaders that the government's work on this issue is not ending, says Farber. CJC has urged Rock to denaturalize and deport any proven former war criminals. To prove former Nazi connections, witnesses are not needed as much as archival evidence that can be found through research, explains Farber.

Farber is critical of Canada's previous governments for avoiding the issue of war criminals. "Clearly the Canadian government has been culpable of willful blindness," he says.

Farber suggests several possible reasons for this. One was fear of exacerbating ethnic tensions in Canada. Another was that the American and British governments put pressure on Canada after the Second World War to ignore the war criminals, because these countries were interested in acquiring German experts in fields such as rocket science.

"Certainly by the '70s, this became moot," says Farber. "There certainly was no excuse in the '80s" for avoiding this issue. Looking at each of these arguments, Farber says, "All of them hold no water."

Solidarity on issue

Although the government has been slow to act on this issue, CJC has been pursuing it for 50 years, Farber asserts. The reason his group is joining forces with other religious groups is to show solidarity on this issue, and "to confirm that this is not an issue for Jews alone," he explains.

The meeting came as a result of a request from the Canadian Christian Jewish Consultation, a group that meets together three or four times a year to discuss concerns shared by Christians and Jews. This seemed to be the right time for these groups to work together because the issue of former war criminals living in Canada has gotten a lot of attention recently, says Farber.

He suggests that Christian groups probably should have done more about this issue before than they did. CJC and Christian groups have worked together before on other issues such as poverty.

Rev. Eric Beresford, the Anglican Church's national coordinator for ethics and interfaith relations, also attended the May 5 meeting. He says the Anglican Church is concerned about not only former Nazi war criminals but other war criminals from places such as the former Yugoslavia who might be living in Canada.

In the international community, "there is a perception that Canada is a haven for war criminals," Beresford observes, and only recently has the Canadian government been doing anything about them.

In the mid-1980s, the Duchesne commission was set up by the Mulroney government and reported that there were "reasonable grounds for believing there were at least 350 former war criminals living in Canada," says Beresford. The commission recommended that these people be tried in a criminal court and be imprisoned or deported if found guilty of war crimes.

But of these 350 people, only one, Imre Finta, was brought to court, says Beresford. Finta was acquitted because of his defense that he was following orders, a defense Beresford regards as invalid.

New evidence

Commenting on that case, Rock said, "The Supreme Court of Canada decided a case called Finta in 1994 that made it very difficult from a practical perspective to proceed in the criminal courts. What we decided to do as a result was to proceed in the federal court in an effort to take away the citizenship of those that we say had not been truthful when they came to Canada, and then ask to have them deported."

At the meeting with Rock, Beresford and others asked if the government was examining new evidence on war criminals that has become available in former communist countries in Eastern Europe since the fall of the Iron Curtain. Rock confirmed that this is being done, reports Beresford.

Beresford says the meeting with Rock was planned well in advance and was not meant to coincide with the present election campaign. Beresford expects the coalition of faith groups will work together again in the future.

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American threatened with death in Iran

... continued from page 1

After a successful mission, the two were crossing back into Afghanistan when their passports were seized by Iranian authorities. Says Baumann, "Having a passport is like having freedom."

They were to report to Teheran to get their passports. The two were interrogated for six hours and accused of being CIA spies. "Scared to death," they were blindfolded and driven to a cell which would be Baumann's home for awhile.

Incarceration

Baumann felt God tell him he would be in prison for nine weeks: "Well, I immediately began to rebuke that. It was like, 'No way.' But to the hour, nine weeks later, I was let go... I say this to show God's faithfulness."

Baumann had no delusions about his prison time being comfortable. Lights were on 24 hours a day and he was blindfolded whenever he went outside. And the boredom was extreme, he says. "If anyone has a book on 100 things to do while in prison, I'd love to have it."

He was constantly threatened with death by an official who did not like the fact that Baumann was a Christian and was in Iran to spread the story of Jesus. However, Baumann felt challenged by God to be totally honest during his incarceration and especially during his initial interrogation in order "to preach the Gospel to the security people of Iran, to tell the high courts of Iran who Jesus is and how Jesus loved them and wanted to save them even though I know the consequences."

Baumann was convinced that God was always in control, even though he himself did not know what was happening.

The "highlight" of Baumann's time in prison was that three guards came to know Christ. The guards talked about Christianity and the foreigners who were there, asking why they came and why they prayed prayers of love for those who could kill them. The guards realized the prisoners had a reason for living and that they did not. In seeking purpose in their lives, the jailers embraced Christ as their Lord and Savior.

The official who threatened Baumann with death came to kill him. One of the guards asserted that he would stand in front of the prisoner so if the official wished to kill Baumann, he would have to kill the guard too. The superior recanted after talking at length with the other guards.

Baumann said the official suffered from "demon possession," and over the course of a few days, he had the demons driven from him. Baumann believes God sent an angel in the form of a guard.

Freedom

Nine weeks to the day of his arrest, Baumann was set free because of the wish for continuing good relations with the Swiss (whose passport Baumann also held). He believes it was the prayers of those around the world that released him from prison.

The official who often threatened Baumann kissed him goodbye in Muslim fashion, that is, with the message that he was a friend and free from wrongdoing. God had touched him too. In his prison cell, Baumann fulfilled his mission work. "Maybe God allowed me to go there ...so that the whole world could pray for Iran, so that many others could come to know Christ."

Jews help Germans accept diversity

Book indicting 'ordinary Germans' a bestseller

Marian Van Til, with files from *The Christian Science Monitor*

BREMEN, Germany — There is an interesting phenomenon afoot in Germany. Despite the rise of neo-Naziism, or perhaps because of it, many Germans seem more willing than ever before to come to terms with their country's Nazi period.

And they're doing it by accepting "sensitivity training" from Jews. And by quickly buying up a recent book by an American Jew, which makes the case that Hitler could not have gotten as far as he did without the zealous consent of "a virtual army of willing accomplices, ordinary citizens whose thinking was so polluted by the anti-Semitism endemic in their society that they murdered with positive enthusiasm," re-ports *The Christian Science Monitor.*

Minces no words

The book by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, entitled *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust,* caused a stir when it was released last spring in North America. Shortly after, it came out in German and has been "a surprise bestseller" in Germany since then, selling 200,000 copies, reports *The Monitor's* Ruth Walker.

Walker describes a booksigning "with its hordes of (mostly) youngish admiring autograph seekers, as well as an undertone of tension, as represented by Mr. Goldhagen's silent bodyguard."

Goldhagen's premise is being taken seriously. And the Journal for German and International Politics in Bonn has awarded him its Democracy Prize (last awarded in 1990 to two human rights activists who helped bring down the Wall).

No immigrants?

Meanwhile, sensitivity training which is helping Germans accept ethnic diversity is being offered by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) of B'nai B'rith. Ruth Walker reports that Germany is just beginning to realize it is an "immigration country," though the government still does not recognize immigrants, but admits only that it has "asylum seekers."

Bremen is the site of the German headquarters for A World of Difference, the diversity-training program being used. It was developed in the U.S. and brought to Germany barely three years ago. ADL's European representative, Robert Goldmann, helped develop the program. (Goldmann fled Germany in 1939 and went to New York.) He says that of all the countries where it's been offered, Germans have been "the most receptive," reports Walker.

Two- or three-day training sessions are being presented in schools, to police forces, social workers and the like.

'Emotionally anchored'

The program gets high marks from many participants because of its positive approach, rather than just telling people, "You can't be racist."

It's not easy, however. The program is designed to make people aware of their own prejudicial attitudes and actions, and it often elicits strong emotions — emotions like anger and sorrow, as well as joy.

Many Germans who tend to be intellectually oriented and reserved have to get used to openly expressing such emotions. But the program is effective, says trainer Regina Piontek, because it allows that. Piontek told *The Monitor* that the trouble with traditional education about the Nazi period was that it was "all cognitive knowledge — facts you learn about what happened and what mustn't be allowed to happen again." The diversity training, however, is "emotionally anchored learning" which forces participants to put human faces on their prejudices.

What the Charter hath wrought

David T. Koyzis

Last month marked the anniversary of the patriation of the Canadian constitution and the adoption of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Now that we have had 15 years to live with an entrenched guarantee of citizens' rights, we can gauge some of its effects on our political system as a whole.

Most significant has been the movement away from the British tradition of parliamentary sovereignty and towards a more American form of constitutional sovereignty. As we have embraced the latter, the role of the courts in our system has been enhanced, for better or worse.

Until recently Canadian government textbooks treated the courts in cursory fashion, rarely devoting as much as half a chapter to them. This omission was justified on the assumption that, because the courts theoretically stood outside the formal policy-making process and limited themselves to the settlement of specific disputes arising under the law, they ought not to be considered a part of the political system proper.

Courts new role

In the last half decade, however, virtually all of the new textbooks or textbook revisions devote a full chapter to the courts, in recognition of their new policy role.

Is this augmented role of the courts good or bad? As with most such developments, it has undoubtedly had both positive and negative consequences. In particular, it has brought our jurisprudential system closer to that of the United States, where the courts have played a mixed role.

In November of last year, the journal *First Things* ("A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life") published a controversial symposium entitled "The End of Democracy? The Judicial Usurpation of Politics." The participants' thesis was that the United States Supreme Court is deciding matters best left to more representative legislative bodies. By effectively making decisions with broad policy implications, the Court is fundamentally changing the character of the American system, which is no longer fully democratic but is close to being a judicial oligarchy.

Although the symposium's introductory essay seemed predicated on the questionable supposition that the American people are innately more virtuous than their elites, it was substantially correct to point out that, when judges encroach on the role of legislators, they inadvertently threaten the political process by reducing it to a kind of zero-sum game, in which various interests are inevitably assigned the status of winners and losers.

Because our Anglo-Saxon judicial system is highly adversarial, there is great danger in attempting to "solve" divisive political issues in such a context. By contrast, ordinary legislative politics is better able to conciliate potentially contesting interests by fashioning compromise solutions minimally satisfactory to all.

Judicious judges

Here in Canada we have largely been spared the worst of American-style judicial politics. There are two reasons for this. First, Section 33 of the Charter, the so-called "notwithstanding clause," permits a legislative override of specified sections of the Charter. Although this clause is rarely invoked, it nevertheless constitutes a potential legislative check on judicial power.

Second, our Supreme Court justices have themselves been fairly restrained in their decisions, leaving considerable latitude for legislative action. A comparison of the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* judgment to the Supreme Court of Canada's 1988 Morgenthaler judgment is revealing in this regard.

We ought not to give up on judicial review, even if it does introduce a nondemocratic element into our political system. The role of the Supreme Court as guarantor of our constitution is a valuable one that should be maintained. Yet it is wise to provide counterbalancing constitutional limits to the authority of the Court itself.

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ont.

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Editorial

Time to pray and to admire the sea's bosom

Life is speeding up. People are getting busier and busier. There are so many choices to make and so many things to do. Entertainment possibilities are endless in and outside the home. Kids have to learn so much in extra-curricular ways — there's ballet, hockey, music lessons, baseball, youth groups at church — you name it. Volunteer life can also be consuming.

I am reminded of a poem written two centuries ago by William Wordsworth that utters a similar complaint:

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!

The poet goes on to lament the fact that we are out of tune with "Nature," which for him is the central life-giving force. In fact, he would rather be a pagan who can appreciate the beauty of the "sea that bares her bosom to the moon" than a Christian who is blind to that.

Wordsworth's worship of nature aside, we can learn from his keen observation that when the world is too much with us, we lay waste (destroy by violence) our powers. And by "world" we don't mean the sinful world of immorality and idolatry, but the mixed world of cultural activities — some good, some bad. We get too much and we spend too much of our energies and resources, and we end up losing our hearts.

Carefully crafted prayers

I was reminded of this when I read a Dutch article about the Reformed practice of table prayer (see below). Few of us will manage to actually sit down to a meal three times a day with the whole family and practise what the author of the article called a "table prayer culture." But do we still do it at least once a day?

How thoughtful and careful are our table prayers?

Whether we use formula prayers, which can at times be very satisfying and helpful whenever we are tired or at a loss for words (the Lord's Prayer is such a prayer), or whether we craft our own prayers, the manner in which we pray will soon reveal our level of devotion and respect for God and our love and concern for the world.

But for that we need to set aside time. Perhaps something else has to give. And if, to the time allotted for prayer and Bible reading, we can add time for good talks at the dinner table, we may soon find that the world is receding and our hearts are being restored.

Maybe we will even have time to admire the "sea that bares her bosom to the moon." That's wholesome eroticism for you. **BW**

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In defence of a table prayer culture

One of our readers passed on a Dutch article without giving us the source or the author. Nevertheless, we decided to translate it for the benefit of our readers. See page 5 for the Dutch text of the two table prayers.

With deep emotion I recognized [in someone's report] our old table prayer — Mother's table prayer:

O, Father, who feeds all of life,
Crown now our table with Thy blessing.
Feed and refresh us with good things
Received from Thy generous hand.
Help us guard ourselves against excess
So that our conduct may be right.
Let us strive for heav'nly things and
Fortify our souls through Thy Word.

Usually, before and after the three daily meals, Dad offered a well-thought-through "free prayer" which he expressed with warmth and conviction. But he was often absent at the evening meal. That's because he had to earn extra income by giving evening lessons at the commercial night school in order to pay for his three sons' schooling.

Mother, who by nature was more reserved, would then restrict herself to this formula prayer. And after the meal she would pray the prayer of thanksgiving, which went:

O, Lord, we thank Thee from the heart
For scarcity and abundance.
While many a person eats bread of sorrow,
Thou hast fed us generously and well.
But give that our souls not cling
To this transitory life,
But do all things that Thou commandest,
And finally live with Thee fore'er.

Terribly old-fashioned language! Reprehensible scholastic theology which denounces earthly life! An easy prey for a mocking modern spirit.

But it was Christian culture which maintained these prayers. They were pronounced with such impressive earnestness that after more than 60 years I can literally bring them to mind.

It was a simple culture, but it stood shoulders above our hasty wordless prayers, which, in all probability, don't even reach to the ceiling, as one preacher put it. Let's hope at least that people today don't just start wolfing down their food without praying. That may fit the dogs of Matthew 15:27, but not humans.

Instead of looking down on this culture, I am reminded of the famous pronouncement by Prof. Klaas Schilder over his "blessed" district elder: "He is a cultural force, even though he doesn't know it, much more so than the good-for-nothings on the other side." [Was he referring to a theatre on the other side of the street or merely talking about opponents? Ed.]

Who will give us suitable mealtime prayers for our time so that, like Luther and Calvin, and in imitation of the Jewish traditon which has been maintained throughout the centuries, we can revive in our families a Christian table culture — a faithful respect for the Giver of all good things?

Letters

In defence of the Institute for Creation Research

I am taking this opportunity to respond to three recent letters in CC, a letter by Jan De Koning and one by Dr. Robert VanderVennen (April 18) and a letter by Dr. Remkes Kooistra (April 25).

De Koning asserts that students who come from schools where evolution is denied run the risk of losing their trust in church doctrine. He further implies that the 1991 report of the study committee on creation and evolution to the CRC synod is the correct and Reformed view.

However, it seems to me that the creation account found in Genesis 1 and 2 is pretty clear and leaves no room for an evolutionary theology, which suggests that morally responsible creatures may well have an evolutionary origin.

Who is secular?

Dr. VanderVennen sees the Institute for Creation Research as a bunch of people who hold to a literalistic interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2. He says that they "assume a secular and deistic world view."

But is VanderVennen not the one who holds a secular view when he states that there is unmistakable evidence from many sources that God took his first step in creation 15 billion years ago? Is VanderVennen referring to 15 billion years prior to when God separated the void? At the risk of being presumptuous, I am supposing that he also puts each creation day into the category of millions of years. Furthermore, those who hold to a 15-billion-year-old earth should be honest and admit that they do not glean that evidence from God's Holy Word.

In Romans 1:19-20, God states that people are without excuse. God has revealed all, both in his special and general revelation. Second Peter 3:5-7 makes pretty clear that God long ago gave a command and the heavens and earth were created. We read further that the heavens and earth that now exist are being preserved by that same command of God.

VanderVennen asks who has the right to define what is true and adds that the well-intended views of the young earth creationists are false propaganda.

I am appalled that some of our influential Reformed writers and leaders label those who believe in the creation story of Genesis 1 and 2, and reiterated in the New Testament, as people who engage in mental trickery and false propaganda.

Confusion? Why not?

Dr. Kooistra refers to a book by Davis Young (*The Biblical Flood*) and quotes Young as saying that none of the assertions of the young earth creationists can pass scientific examination. I would challenge Kooistra, De Koning and VanderVennen and others to read the refreshing biblical views of Dr. Walter T. Brown Jr.'s book *In the Beginning*. As former director of the Centre for Scientific Creation, Brown is well acquainted with the views of Reformed scholars, including those of Davis Young.

It is interesting that Kooistra makes the observation that God would never have created rocks or fossils to indicate an old age just to confuse scientists. God does say in his Word that he will confuse whom he will and enlighten whom he will. A mystery perhaps? But God knows very well who will believe in his Word and who will not.

In Matt. 11: 25-26, Jesus gives thanks to his Father, the Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding from the wise and learned that which has been shown to the unlearned.

Serious consequences?

According to his letter, Kooistra obviously does not believe that the world's social and political ills are a consequence of evolutionary theology (Darwinism). He seems to believe that the language of the religious right is blazing hate and condemnation and are expressions of irresponsible Christian leadership.

The truth and revelation of God's Word leaves no room for personal preferences, insight or intuition. The undeniable record of and witness to the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ stands and has been prophesied and revealed in that same Holy Word of God in which we read the creation story.

God warns that if we add or take away from his Word, our very faith in Jesus as our Lord and Savior will eventually be taken away from us. The thought will occur to some readers, I am sure, that my views are just another expression of a well-intended but simplistic, uninformed layperson. However, that same Holy Spirit that convinces me of being a sinner in need of redemption through Christ my Lord, also convinces me that God's Word is all revealing and the only reliable source of discernment.

And those of us who hold to a young world and the Genesis 1 and 2 account of creation deserve the same Christian love and courtesy that I continue to ascribe to those who think otherwise.

Albert Rumph
Thornbury, Ont.

We will e-mail each other

DELETEed from "Don't reform the church; re-FORMAT it!" (CC, April 25) were the possibilities of RAM and SAVE. That's STYLE. I had an inspiration similar to Witvoet's a few months ago (to the tune "We are One in the Spirit"):

Technically One

We are one on the inner net, we are one in the Web,
We are one on the inner net, we are one in the Web,
And we feel that our unity will be technical;

Refrain: And they'll know we are online by our RAM, by our drive,
Yes, they'll know we are in line by our power.

We will e-mail each other, we will key and then send,
We will e-mail each other, we will key and then send,
And together we'll spread the news (technology rules):
Refrain.

We will access each other, we will link click by click,
We will access each other, we will link click by click,
And we'll guard each one's dignity, and save each one's pride.
Refrain.

All gaze at technology, from which all things come,
And all gaze at the monitor, if only for fun,
And all gaze at the Internet, which makes us one.
Refrain:

Len Van Harten
London, Ont.

Dutch table prayer

(See editorial, page 4)

O, Vader, die al't leven voedt,
Kroon onze tafel met Uw zegen,
Spijs en drenk ons met het goed
Van Uwe milde hand verkregen.
Doe ons voor overdaad ons wachten
Dat w'ons gedragen zo 't behoort.
Laat ons het Hemelse betrachten,
Sterk onze ziele door Uw Woord.

O, Heer, wij danken U van harte
Voor nooddruft en voor overvloed.
Waar menig mensch eet brood der smarte,
Hebt Gij ons mild en wel gevoed.
Doch geef dat onze ziele niet
Aan dit vergank'lijk leven kleev',
Maar alles doe wat Gij gebiedt
En eind'lijk eeuwig bij U leev'.

Christian Courier

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Dordt listed among top 'character-building' colleges and named a 'best buy'

Marian Van Til, with files from Sue Droog

SIOUX CENTER, Iowa — Dordt College recently has had two new feathers placed in its educational cap. It has been named to the John Templeton Foundation's 1997-98 "Honor Roll for Character-Building Colleges" and has been listed as one of the 100 "best college buys" in the U.S. by *The Student Guide to America's Best 100 College Buys*.)

The Templeton Foundation's designation recognizes colleges and universities which emphasize character-building as an integral part of their educational experience.

"One of the primary goals of education is the development of moral character — those habits of heart, mind and spirit that help students know, love and do what is good," says Dr. John M. Templeton, Jr., president of the foundation and son of its founder. Templeton said Dordt's "demonstrated efforts to develop moral character in students" give it a deserved place on the foundation's Honor Roll.

Spiritual and moral criteria

All four-year accredited undergraduate institutions in the U.S. were invited to qualify for participation by submitting an essay that addressed certain criteria. Those criteria were designed to evaluate the extent to which a college or university:

~ inspires students to develop and strengthen their moral reasoning skills;

~ encourages spiritual growth and moral values;

~ provides community-building experiences;

~ advocates a drug-free lifestyle;

~ conducts a critical assessment of character-building programs and activities.

A total of 135 institutions out of the thousands possible were chosen for this year's Honor Roll and will be featured in the *1997-98 Honor Roll for Character Building Colleges Reference Guide*, which will be available in the fall. The foundation sends out 65,000 complimentary copies to libraries, high school guidance counsellors and interested parents and students (1-800-245-1285).

The John Templeton Foundation was established 10 years ago by international investment manager Sir John Marks Templeton to promote a wide range of developments in both education and religion.

Good bargain for the frugal

As for Dordt's other honor, the guide which said Dordt provides a lot of education for the money was compiled by Institutional Research and Evaluation of Gainesville, Georgia.

The company researched 1,800 American colleges and universities and then listed the best 100 in terms of value for money. In addition, it provides an overview of each institution, lists costs, sources of financial aid, majors offered and information on campus life.

The guide's publisher, John Culler, says, "Our research has shown that a prospective student could save $30,000 to $50,000 or more on a quality college education at one of these schools."

The list is split almost evenly between public and private institutions and is diverse. It ranges from tiny Lyon College in Arkansas with less than 500 students to the well-known Texas A&M with 29,000 students.

Cultivating class

After the buzzer

Tim Antonides

Tim Antonides

It never fails. I take my Grade 5 P.E. class to the gym to play indoor soccer. I choose the teams meticulously, paying careful attention to ability level as well as "politics." Yet a voice always pipes up: "These teams are unfair."

We start the game. Craig bumps into Glen along the wall. Glen overreacts and bumps Craig back-onto the floor. Ian sees this and laughs at Craig. Craig starts screaming at Ian. I blow the whistle and we sort out what's just happened.

Now, not all of my P.E. classes go like this. (If they did, I'd hang up the whistle, sell my truck and go teach English in Hungary.) Still, it happens enough that it has made me think often about why kids seem to have such a hard time competing fairly in sports.

Part of it comes from what they've learned by watching those around them. Most of it, I think, comes from what they haven't learned: how to display a little class.

Class 'does not compute'

It's not for lack of effort from parents and teachers, however. How often we tell kids not to dwell on who wins or loses; to play clean; to shake hands after the game! We're pretty good at this "direct instruction" approach. Too bad that kids are missing a key component: role models who have class.

They do exist, though. Mario Lemieux is (was) a class act. He wasn't a whiner. He didn't try to chop other players to get an edge. He played with heart and courage. He played with class.

Greg Norman is another one. A bit abrasive, a bit arrogant off the golf course, perhaps. But on the course, a class act. He had last year's Master's sewn up. All he had to do was hit a few more decent shots. He choked, butchered the last remaining holes, and lost the tournament. His reaction? He walked over to the tournament winner and shook his hand. His post-tournament comment? "I messed up." It wasn't the wind, the gallery, the pressure, the grass, the clubs or the tournament officials. That, my friends, is class.

Transformation of spirit needed

Why do athletes like these stick out in our memories? Because they're so rare. Professional athletes set the standard for athletic integrity. It goes something like this: intimidate, degrade and belittle your opponents to get an advantage. When you play poorly, blame your circumstances (and the ref, of course). When you play well, swagger and strut around the bases; do a dance in the endzone, stick a finger in the enemy's face. Better yet, renegotiate your contract.

This is not entirely new. Lack of class is now as pervasive in pro sports as it is in rush-hour traffic. What is new is how readily kids are adapting the same attitudes.

If we're serious about being transformed by the renewing of our minds, we also need to be serious about the rest of Romans 12 (i.e., being "fervent in spirit, patient in difficulty, repaying no one evil for evil, living peaceably with all people").

Translation? Let's point out to our sons and daughters that the forward who just took a dive in front of the ref is playing trash hockey. Explain how someone like Dennis Rodman is wasting away an incredible basketball career with idiotic goonery and self-glorification. Applaud the defensive end who extends his hand and helps up the quarterback he just crunched.

Who knows? Maybe one day Craig, Glen and Ian will do the same.

Tim Antonides teaches Grade 5 and coaches basketball at Surrey Chr. School, Surrey, B.C.

Unique software agreement benefits Alberta students

EDMONTON (GOA) — Purchasing software for use in schools has become substantially more affordable thanks to an agreement between Alberta Education and Microsoft. The agreement is the first of its kind in Canada.

The agreement, valued by Microsoft at $10 million, allows all schools and school boards in the province to purchase Microsoft software for an average of one-quarter of suggested retail prices over the next two years. Each school jurisdiction will receive a copy of *Communications Tools for Schools*, a collection of software programs, for duplication and distribution to their schools, as part of the agreement.

The agreement is part of Microsoft's Connected Learning Community program. Through it, Microsoft works with educators and schools to increase student access to technology and to create stronger links between students, parents, educators and the extended community.

"This agreement allows schools and school boards to make more effective use of the matching funds provided under the Technology Integration Funding program," notes Education Minister Gary Mar. "We hope that discussions being held with other software suppliers will lead to similar agreements."

For home use too

The agreement also permits schools and boards to make one copy, for use on home or portable computers, of most desktop application software purchased. This makes this software available for home use by teachers to develop lesson plans, classroom activities and related materials.

Schools and school boards will be able to choose from a range of Microsoft educational products, including

* software tools to facilitate home-school communications;
* Microsoft Office 97;
* Encarta 97 Encyclopedia;
* product-specific ideas, with teachers' activity guides and lesson plans;
* Homework Help, which includes an interactive component and links to the Internet.

The Edmonton, Calgary and Elk Island public and separate school boards were consulted during the negotiation process. The agreement includes all public, charter and private schools in the province.

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"Brown Bag Canada" campaign

Video Reviews

The Bishop and spouse 50 years later

Marian Van Til

The Bishop's Wife

Stars Cary Grant, Loretta Young, David Niven, Elsa Lanchester, the Mitchell Boychoir. Screenplay by Robert E. Sherwood and Leonardo Bercovici, from the novel by Robert Nathan. Directed by Henry Koster.

The Bishop's Wife, released in 1947, has become a classic, featuring as it does a heartwarming story (with a moral) and three actors who became legendary: Cary

UNIVERSAL PICTURES

Cary Grant

Grant as the angel, Dudley; Loretta Young as the title character, Julia Brougham; and David Niven as Bishop Henry Brougham.

Bishop Henry is being consumed by his grand plan to build a cathedral, which he believes will unite the people of his diocese. Not all see the need — some parishes under the Bishop's care are languishing; so Henry's cathedral fundraising project is not going well. Not unrelatedly, neither is his marriage. He's so busy with his normal church work and his cathedral plans that he has little time for Julia, and their young daughter, Debby.

Henry realizes that he's in a predicament, so he prays for guidance (though he doesn't see the real problem). Enter Dudley the angel.

Entertaining angel

Dudley announces himself as an angel but, ironically, has a hard time overcoming the clergyman's skepticism and distaste. The Bishop just can't seem to get on Dudley's wave length, spiritually or emotionally. Until the almost bitter end, Henry continues to see Dudley as a nuisance.

On the other hand, all the others who meet Dudley — Julia, Debby, their maid, their professor friend, the Bishop's secretary, a cab driver — are unaware that Dudley is a divine servant but they warm to him quickly and are open to his ministrations. Thus their spirits benefit from his presence while the Bishop continues to resist, act jealously, and pay the consequences.

This is a romantic comedy, so of course everything works out in the end; that is, not quite like Henry expects, but like it should: Mrs. Hamilton (Elsa Lanchester), the wealthy benefactor who was to have given a fortune for the cathedral, has a change of heart. At first she insisted, "You will build that cathedral as I want it or you will not build it at all." But in the end her money goes to help the poor. And Henry and Julia's relationship is rekindled. No one, however, has any memory of Dudley.

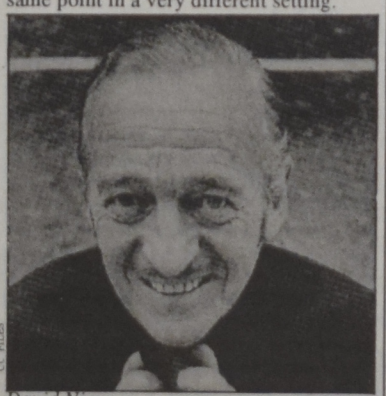
God vs. family

This film is both funny and touching, and contains fragments of gospel (and not unexpectedly, some tidbits of somewhat questionable theology). While there are no overt references in the dialogue to rekindled faith in Christ being the answer to the Bishop's predicament, Dudley amply demonstrates the bishop's need for a spiritual reawakening.

The story is set at Christmas time which allows for the significance of Christ's birth to be candidly stated in the carols and anthems sung by a parish's boys' choir. At the start we clearly hear the text of two stanzas of "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," the carol that, of all the well-known carols, most succinctly states the salvation story.

Later, the boys sing in an anthem refrain: "O Word of God for us incarnate,/by faith we hear thine angels sing/hymns of praise to thee, their King" — not the kind of thing we're used to hearing in movies anymore (or even 50 years ago).

The Bishop's Wife makes a salient point, if in a lighthearted manner, about the negative repercussions which are likely to occur when you're so caught up in doing the "Lord's" work that you neglect your marriage partner, children and friends. *The Preacher's Wife,"* a 1996 remake of the 1947 film, makes the same point in a very different setting.



CFC FILMS

David Niven

The Preacher's Wife

Stars Denzel Washington, Whitney Houston, Courtney B. Vance, Gregory Hines, Justin Pierre Edward, the Georgia Mass Choir. Screenplay by Nat Mauldin and Allan Scott. Directed by Penny Marshall.

Times and our culture have changed radically in the 50 years between the making of these two films. But busyness

Courtney B. Vance, Denzel Washington and Whitney Houston star in The Preacher's Wife.

can still overwhelm the best of preachers (and the rest of us) and obscure our view of God. *The Preacher's Wife* does a good job of bringing that theme into the late 20th century.

The subculture this time is not white, Anglican America (or Britain) but black evangelical America. Henry and Julia are now surnamed "Biggs" and they have a son, Jeremiah, instead of a daughter. (The angel is still called Dudley.)

Henry pastors an inner-city church which seems to be spiritually thriving but financially languishing. His nemesis is not a parishioner, but Mr. Hamilton (Gregory Hines), a man who grew up in the neighborhood and has become a successful land developer. Hamilton is poised to buy out the church and erect an upscale development with condos, shops, daycare and everything they need, he argues, including a new church. But he doesn't tell them they will be priced out of the new "neighborhood."

Julia, this time, is actively involved in music in the congregation. Of course she would be, with singer Whitney Houston playing the part. That's a bonus. The gospel music here, sung by Whitney and the church choir (the Georgia Mass Choir) is lively and inspiring, and there's lots of it; the contemporary Christian Christmas music is slightly less impressive but still good.

Cary Grant hard to beat

The plot works out essentially the same in both films but there's one annoying change in the remake. In the original, the attraction that develops between the angel and the bishop's wife is not allowed to become an overt sexual attraction. In the remake it is; it doesn't go anywhere of course, but this new element impairs rather than improves the plot.

On the other hand, having the Biggs' five-year-old son narrate an introduction and be the only one who remembers the angel's appearance works well, and gives occasion for a well-placed comment about what faith is. The only scene that rings false is Hamilton's quick transformation into nice-guy-with-a-conscience.

The performances in *The Bishop's Wife* were sterling. Cary Grant gave Dudley the dignity we'd expect of a divine messenger,and winsome good humor. But Denzel Washington as Dudley is a little too "earthly." Whitney Houston is impressive in her title role, as is Courtney B. Vance as the hot/cold preacher.

Not ashamed

While watching the original I thought about how one never sees films made today which can assume a Christian audience (not even culturally Christian) or which make such overt faith references. But then I watched the 1996 remake and was even more surprised: the Christianity expressed is even more o vert (it's possible the screenwriters are Christians).

Though few actors today can match Cary Grant's ability to charm audiences, on the whole, *The Preacher's Wife* is as good as or better than *The Bishop's Wife*.

Because these films are set at Christmas they would be especially effective for watching at Christmastime gatherings. But they are both fine examples of family or church-group entertainment that can be enjoyed any time.

Coffee Break is bringing a new generation to Christ

Margaret Griffioen-Drenth

BURLINGTON, Ont. — Twelve women came to the Lord at the eighth Coffee Break Inspirational Rally held here in April, according to the results of the rally evaluation form and corresponding follow-up work by the planning committee.

There were many other wonderful components to the rally: keynote speaker Betty Veldman, Coffee Break executive director, had the over 1,000 participants in stitches and tears; the 17 workshops were inspiring; Colleen Reinders, Grace Moes and their music team were uplifting; and the local Christian School Willing Workers provided an abundance of great snacks and lunches. However, *twelve* women organizers know of (maybe there were more) came to the Lord. In heaven there is a celebration every time someone turns to God; we should take our cue from heaven.

Those involved in Coffee Break sometimes question its value. After all, it's not as trendy or high glitz in style as are some other ministries. In a nut shell, it's women in local churches providing a weekly Bible study for women in their congregation and community. Along side it is Story Hour, a pre-school program for children. This simple strategy, however, has become one of the Christian Reformed Church's most important evangelistic tools.

How the theme was chosen

Marilyn Howard was a long-time leader and participant in the Ontario Coffee Break program. She was able to attend one planning meeting for this rally before her cancer overwhelmed her body and she went to be with the Lord in November 1996. Isaiah 41:10 was her testimony and the committee celebrated Marilyn's life by choosing this verse for its theme.

Used in 31 denominations

Developed in 1970 from a program at Peace CRC in South Holland, Ill., Coffee Break is now found in over 31 denominations in Canada and the U.S. and in several other countries around the world, and has spawned a men's program as well. While no comprehensive participant numbers are available, based on 1996 study guide sales, approximately 60,000 people used

MARGARET GRIFFIOEN DRENTH

Betty Veldman

Coffee Break/Story Hour material last year (some groups do use other small group Bible study materials in their programs).

Betty Veldman, in her workshop with leaders, noted that Coffee Break — along with the church — is facing changes, as it strives to minister and witness to a culture in which for the first time, a large core of people do not have a "Christian memory" — there was no Christianity in their lives growing up, and little sign of it in the prevailing culture. "In a competitive, consumer-oriented culture we have to use multiple materials ... to meet the needs of the women who come out," said Veldman. "We need to show them that their needs are met in Jesus Christ."

Veldman was able to use her own life story as a testament to how this works. Through her two keynote addresses, she shared the pain of her divorce and alienation from her two sons, all of which occurred as she prepared to become Coffee Break's International Director in the late '80s. "I was stripped of everything that I thought was my identity so that I could come to see my identity as God's child," she acknowledges. The rally theme "Fear Not... God Upholds You" (Is.41:10) is a daily theme for Veldman.

Veldman encourages participants to "get out of the boat" like Peter did. To take a risk, to follow God's leading, despite our human fears; and to know that if we do fall or sink as Peter did, Christ will be there to take our outstretched hand and uphold us. For Veldman, those risks have sometimes been humorous, as in her determination to learn to ski — although a leg injury several weeks before the rally almost prohibited her from coming. Other risks, such as being Coffee Break keynote speaker, have been more efforts of faith, for which even the ski injury could not provide an easy out. "If we don't risk getting out of the boat, we risk never experiencing the joy of walking on the water," Veldman asserts.

Rally quotables:

"Whatever we give up for Him will never compare with the flood of blessing we receive from Him." — *Betty Veldman.*

"There are 366 'Fear nots' in the Bible — one for every day of the year and an extra one for leap year" — *Workshop leader.*

"When men sing it's singing, when women sing it's as though we hear angels in heaven." — *Male workshop leader as he listened to the 1,000 participants sing with Colleen and Grace.*

"The antidote to fear is love, perfect love, God's love. There are only two other words which are referenced in the Bible more than love: they are Lord and God." — *Betty Veldman.*

Michigan Christian school releases teacher re: homosexual views

KALAMAZOO, Mich. (URNS) — Despite protests by nine of the 13 Christian Reformed ministers in the area, the Kalamazoo Christian School Association board has voted not to renew the teaching contract of Don Bergman, a 30-year veteran social studies teacher at Kalamazoo Christian High School, "because he takes a position on homosexual monogamous relationships that the [association] board believes is unbiblical."

According to the formal motion passed by the school board, "offering a contract to Mr. Bergman would call into question the school's adherence and commitment to biblical teaching and the authority of Scripture in all matters of faith and life."

The March 25 decision drew little attention until a month later when a letter to teaching staff announcing the "non-renewal" of Bergman's contract was leaked to the news media, apparently by a fellow teacher. The school board's decision follows last December's decision by the Christian Reformed denominational board of trustees to remove Bergman from a synodical study committee on homosexuality because of his views supporting gay marriage.

Bergman says he supports his gay son's desire to find a life partner, and is critical of the CRC's position against homosexual relationships of any kind.

'Uncharitable'

School superintendent Dr. Bruce Hekman says the discussion with Bergman "took place frankly and honestly and [on] what I would call a high plane."

"What we have here is a difference of opinion between a person of integrity and a school system of integrity. The discussion has focused almost entirely on the critical theological issue related to whether or not the Bible allows the possibility of monogamous homosexual relations."

That wasn't the view of nine local Christian Reformed pastors who signed a Jan. 30 pastoral letter to the school board urging that Bergman not be removed from his position.

"...Not one of the nine signatories to the letter agreed with Don Bergman's position, nevertheless [we] felt that the action on the recommendation of the board was uncharitable, unjust and unnecessary," says Rev. Neal Rylaarsdam of Portage, who convened local pastors to address the Bergman case. The other letter signees were Revs. Robert Arbogast, Gary Stevens, Mark Scheffers, Robert Boersma, Ronald Vanderwell, Kenneth Baker, Mark Van't Hof and Steven Van Heest.

Rylaarsdam says Bergman has consulted an attorney, but his future plans are unclear.

'March to 2000' explains devotion to Mary

Marian Van Til

PRINCE ALBERT, Sask. — A recent Catholic prayer conference called "March to 2000" aimed to get Catholics to increase their prayer lives and spirituality as the new millenium approaches. Part of the focuss was on devotion to Mary, a topic with which Protestants take issue.

Bishop Raymond Roussin insists that Protestants misunderstand Catholics' perception of Mary: Catholics have been falsely accused of idolatry, reports the Canadian Catholic News Service and *The Catholic Register.* Because "she has transformed lives," Mary is venerated; but God is worshipped. (The Orthodox churches make the same distinction.)

Veneration and worship are not the same. "The experience of Mary's presence is not a parallel experience to the power of God," Roussin says. "Mary is not God. But she is so much in touch with God that her presence naturally will put us in touch with the divine." Bishop Roussin encouraged his listeners to include Mary in their prayer lives "because she leads people to Christ."

'Re-situated'

If Protestants are unaware that the Roman Catholic Church has "reformed" its view of Mary, knowledgable Catholics aren't. Before the sweeping changes brought in by the Second Vatican Council, Roussin admitted that Mary had been "put on a pedestal" until "she almost didn't seem to be human anymore." She was the focus of devotion "that did not always return us to Christ." Vatican II "helped us to re-situate her at the heart of the church."

Most Protestants would argue that Mary wasn't "re-situated" far enough; she is still seen, in Roussin's words, as "a mediator in their prayer life with God." But he insists that only means that "Mary becomes the medium through which we are open, not to her, but through her to Christ."

CRC ministry funding hurt by new trends

You can't be Christian Reformed without quotas

Rachel Boehm Van Harmelen

A denomination-wide decline in support of ministry shares (formerly known as quotas) for Christian Reformed Church ministries mirrors trends taking place in all North American denominations, experts say.

"North American Christians are shifting support to people and projects which are able to generate 'financial bonding,'" said a 1992 CRC synodical committee to study denominational funding. "As the result of highly sophisticated media presentations, donors are made to 'feel close' to certain causes, and therefore they are willing to support them, believing that their donations are being more effectively used for such causes than they are for causes which may seem distant."

Low costs

Through ministry shares, each Christian Reformed congregation is asked to set aside a yearly amount per member for ministries of the CRC (determined annually by synod). This method results in very low administrative costs (only 14 per cent overall for CRC ministries), but can leave donors feeling removed from the causes they support.

Many local congregations present the ministry shares commitment as a single-line item at budget time, failing to inform their members which agencies are funded through the ministry shares pool. The result is that many members do not know where their donations go.

Despite the failure of ministry shares to help donors "bond" with their causes, CRC leaders say ministry shares are still the most effective way to support denominational ministries.

"There are no disadvantages to ministry shares," says Dave Radius, U.S. director for Christian Reformed World Missions. "All you have to do is ask other denominations about their system, compare it to ours, and you will find out that we have a good thing going. When you consider how low our overhead expenses are, in part because of ministry shares, we should be very grateful for the system."

Catherine Page, a member of Church of the Servant CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich., wasn't raised in the CRC and admits she doesn't understand ministry shares. "I went through a new members class that met for four or five sessions," Page says. "However, the finer details of church funding were not covered." Page suggests a follow-up class dealing with concepts like ministry shares to educate new members.

Personal contact needed

"I think I understand the ministry shares system fairly well, but many in my congregation do not," says Rev. Paul DeVries, senior pastor at Unity CRC in Prospect Park, N.J. "The problem is lack of connection with denominational ministries.... We need personal contact with and attention from the ministries we support."

"Just having more paper around does not help, no matter how fancy it is," says August Guillaume, a member of Fellowship CRC in Edmonton. "These resources are simply not picked up very much. Perhaps the CRC organizations should not give services to churches who do not give 100 per cent of their shares or give discounts to those who do, so it becomes obvious what is happening."

Despite the ongoing debate about ministry shares the governing bodies of the CRC have remained fully committed to the system. While continuing to look at ways to enhance or adapt ministry shares, the question of discontinuing the system has not been formally discussed. For many CRC members, including members of the 1992 committee, ministry shares, aren't an option — they're part of what it means to be Christian Reformed.

It's simple

Rev. Lloyd Burghart, pastor of Rimbey CRC, Rimbey, Alta., says the concept of ministry shares is simple. "The church of Jesus Christ is commissioned by God to go, preach, baptize and teach," Burghart says. "To further this we have established agencies. They need our support and by means of ministry shares we share in their support. I think the name says it. Ministry shares are a way of sharing in denominational and classical ministry."

Rachel Boehm Van Harmelen works in communications/development for CRWRC in Burlington, Ont.

Who's your power source in pleasure and in suffering?

Chapter & Verse

Wayne Brouwer
Andrew Kuyvenhoven
✱ Laura Smit
Al Wolters

"I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me." (Phil. 4:12-13).

I have a friend who is going to be ordained next month. She recently accepted a call to a small congregation in a lovely small town. The people there are eager to love her. They've been fixing up the manse, planning new programs and organizing welcoming coffees.

My friend has had a few hard years, facing a staggering load of grief, overwork and stress. Those of us who care for her are delighted to think that she will finally be somewhere pleasant and peaceful where people appreciate her gifts and treat her well.

However, she almost didn't accept the call to this church precisely because she thought that it sounded too pleasant, too perfect, too agreeable. She felt guilty at the prospect of such a prosperous life. She was convinced that God would want her to do something more difficult and painful. As one who has been a pastor in a small-town church, I'm sure that she will find sufficient pain there. But from her vantage point, at first it just looked too easy. She has had to be convinced that sometimes God calls us to joy and to gladness.

Self-inflicted suffering

I've been reading about Francis of Assisi lately, and he seems to have had a problem similar to that of my friend. He believed that faithfulness to God required him to suffer, so he sought out suffering at every turn in his life. Often, as I read, I am appalled by the level of pain he inflicted on himself. I certainly believe that if we are faithful to God, we will suffer as a by-product of that faithfulness. But that is logically different than saying that we are to seek out suffering as a means by which we become faithful.

Sometimes the distinction between those two attitudes is difficult to make. In the course of our lives there may be a very fine line between them. Unlike my friend and unlike Francis, I have strong impulses toward avoiding pain. I would have found the pleasantness of the small-town church to be a reason for accepting the call, not a reason for rejecting it.

I know that sometimes I turn away from faithfulness because it looks like an unpleasant path which will produce pain which I don't want to face. As I read Francis and as I talk to my friend, I need to allow their extreme need to suffer to speak to my extreme need to avoid suffering.

Contentment on either hand

Here in Philippians, Paul seems to have found the middle path. He claims that he is able to be content both when he is in want and when he has more than enough. On the one hand, he knows how to suffer. His life certainly gives testimony to that. Paul never turned away from following Christ in order to avoid pain. On the other hand, he also knows how to enjoy abundance. He has learned "the secret of being well-fed" and has the ability to give thanks when God sends pleasure.

It is this pervasive contentment to which Paul refers when he says that he can do all things through God who strengthens him. I am used to thinking of that strength as being necessary for facing down pain, but unnecessary for accepting joy.

But Paul attributes his balance to the fact that in all states of lie he is dependent on God for his strength. Perhaps I find it so difficult to face suffering because I enjoy pleasure in my own strength rather than in God's strength. So when suffering comes, I need to change my power supply, and that is unsettling. Perhaps my friend is afraid of a peaceful life because she has learned to be dependent on God in the context of suffering and she is afraid that if life becomes pleasant she will no longer lean on him.

Unlike either of us, Paul powered all parts of his life from the same source, so the movement from want to plenty and back again was smooth and unbroken. Which side of the balance do you need to learn?

Laura Smit is a pastor in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) who is currently doing doctoral work in philosophical aesthetics at Boston University, Boston, Mass.

Hindu leader wins Templeton prize

LONDON, England (EP) — Hindu leader Pandurang Shastri Athavale is this year's winner of the prestigious Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion.

Athavale, 76, is the founder of a Hindu movement that emphasizes self-knowledge and the selfless love of one's neighbors. The group, known as the Swadhyayees, began in 1954 with 20 people; it now numbers about 200,000. Members travel throughout India encouraging personal spirituality and social action on behalf of the poor.

The prize, worth $1.21 million (US), was established in 1972 by investment manager John M. Templeton to recognize those who advance the world's understanding of religion.

Athavale said he will give all of the money to the Swadhyaya movement, which sponsors housing and agricultural projects throughout India.

Feature

What shall we do?

A. Hilbers (translated by Bert Witvoet)

"When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'" (Acts 2:37).

Two question marks appear in the Pentecost story: one at the beginning and one at the end.

The one at the beginning expresses perplexity, and that's easy to understand. Something unusual is happening in Jerusalem.

A relatively small group, recognized by some as the entourage of Jesus of Nazareth who was executed more than a month earlier, is suddenly drawing attention in a quite extraordinary way.

Everyone hears these people talking in his or her own language about the great acts of God. How is that possible? That's the first question of Pentecost.

Back to the prophets

Jerusalem doesn't know what to think of this miracle. Consequently, there are those who dismiss it with a cheap joke: "They have had too much wine."

We encounter the second question mark near the end of Acts 2. By that time no one is trying to make the incomprehensible look ridiculous by being funny. That's because someone has spoken, someone who exegeted a text.

Peter has stood up to counter the words of those who had tried to win over the jokers in the crowd. He has indicated that Pentecost has to do with highly serious matters.

Using a text from Joel he explains what's going on:"This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel" to show how Jesus Christ is the secret behind the miracles of this day. It is he who has poured out his Spirit — he who so recently, by the hands of lawless people, was nailed to the cross and killed.

No, Peter puts it slightly differently. He says, "*You*, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross."

That's the third time the Apostle addresses his audience directly, saying "you" in the fire of his Pentecost sermon. You can see him point to the ones who earlier had made their sneering remarks, who had expected anything except that they would be so directly addressed.

PHOTO DIARY 1989

"What shall we do?" What is left to do when people realize they have opposed God himself?

Before they know it, the Galilean pulls out another text, and another one. Driven by the power of the Holy Spirit, Peter holds the fire of the Scripture near their heels. And it becomes increasingly clear to them that everything turns around that one name which Peter has mentioned several times already: Jesus the Nazarene.

The last words of Peter's sermon thunder through the streets of Jerusalem: "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom *you* crucified, both Lord and Christ."

This is nothing left to laugh about. The message of Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen one, the ascended Lord, has by means of the Holy Spirit penetrated deep into their hearts. And at once they realize their horrifying responsibility.

Can't escape the 'you'

That word "you" and the poking finger of Peter won't let them go. They have crucified the Son of God! They are face to face with the God who has raised him and has fulfilled his promises to his Son. And they are face to face with this Jesus, to whom has been given all power in heaven and on earth.

Now what?

That's the second question. It arises from the depths of their guilt, from the awareness of a responsibility they can't carry and which crushes them. "What shall we do?" What is *left* to do when people realize they have opposed God himself?

What was there left for David to do when he was suddenly unmasked by the "you" of the prophet Nathan? What is there left for us to do when, under the preaching of the Word, we are brought to the discovery of how we stand guilty before God?

Let's be honest: we can't, just like that, step into the history of Acts 2 and place ourselves in that crowd at Pentecost. The accusing finger of the gospel will also be pointed at us, the collective "you." Jesus Christ bore his cross because of *our* guilt as well as that of the Pentecost crowd. He took on himself the judgment of God which you and I deserve.

But it is still the Good News that pushes that perplexing question to the fore.

In all his holy earnestness Peter knows how to stand in the service of a Savior who came with a joyful message, to rescue sinners. He knows all too well that he must now quickly give an answer to that "What shall we do?"

"Repent and be baptized, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

It's an answer that breaks the almost unbearable tension. There is forgiveness! More than that — there is forgiveness in the name of Jesus, the one whom they (and we) crucified.

It's a message out of which we may live every day anew when we can do nothing other than to acknowledge before God that we tried again to oppose him; that we have done nothing but increase our guilt against him.

"What shall we do?" In fact, that's the deepest question in every person's life. —

What shall we do when, under the proclamation of the suffering and dying of the Son of God, we discover the immeasurable abyss of our own guilt?

Joyful laughter

We may through the power of the Spirit of Pentecost say, "He stands in my place, otherwise I should have to die the eternal death." And then laughter becomes appropriate.

Read the rest of Acts 2. There they are, all together, the Christians of the first hour. They break bread in their homes and enjoy their suppers with joy and simplicity of heart. And they praise God and enjoy the favor of all people. Jeering laughter has turned into a laughter of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

There were two questions at Pentecost. One of perplexity and one of consternation. And there was preaching that said that God does not want to leave us stuck with question marks.

Reprinted from De Wekker of May 24, 1991.

Feature

The Holy Spirit turns wimps into heroes

SMITHERS, B.C — Curt Gesch, Bible teacher at the Bulkley Valley Christian School secondary campus, asked his Grade 10 students what Acts 2 has to say to our world today. These are some of the answers he got.

In Acts 2, people gave up their possessions and shared everything they had. How many times have you heard of that happening recently? Sure, there are people who devote their lives to God — pastors and missionaries — but the only groups who I can think of that do it thoroughly are the nuns and monks of the Roman Catholic Church.

Now does this mean that we should stop reading this essay this very minute and go out and give everything away? And devote our entire lives to spreading the message of salvation?

My dad thought so. I don't know, yet, if I agree with him. To leave all your comforts, never go to the movies or splurge on some new clothes — because God doesn't want us to have any fun? No! If we took this approach it would be because we would be too busy evangelizing the world.

The Holy Spirit came to earth as a violent wind from heaven. What's the opposite of a wind? Is it like something imploding instead of exploding, or is it like a vacuum?

Imagine that the Holy Spirit were suddenly sucked up back to heaven. What effect would it have on us! All the positive things that happened would turn to negative. The only power on earth would be evil. Wouldn't the Devil rejoice if that happened, just as he loathed the day that the Spirit came from heaven!

When the Spirit came, he had such an awesome effect on the people: new members of Christ's church were added every day, people gave generously and miracles and wonders spilled out onto the people. I shudder to think of what the outcome would be if the Spirit were suddenly taken away. (Use your imagination). Thank God for sending us the Holy Spirit.

Alanna Reding

In the New Testament all Christians get the Holy Spirit. In other religions only the "best" or a specific or special group are close to the "spirits." In Acts, just like in all of the New Testament, God is and can work through everyone. We all have something to do!

Jennifer Hamhuis

...Another thing is that when God's Spirit comes, people are united to God and people are united to people. In Psalm 87 it shows that God wants our enemies to be counted as [part of] Zion. And when people are saved we have communication with them.

Michelle Close

It seems today that we are a lot like Babel, where everyone began speaking different languages and became confused, retreating into groups of the same language. In the same way today, we Christians are finding it easier to commune between ourselves, not with outcasts and unbelievers. Even our churches are becoming cliques in society.

Now I'm not saying every Christian is like this because I know that many aren't (e.g., Mother Theresa or Billy Graham and many others), but it seems as if this is one problem that is real in our world today.

Acts 2 has an awesome example of real unity that brought many to salvation, a result that can happen if we break down our barriers, whatever they may be.

Kirsten Uyesugi

Acts 2 shows that even the apostles were scared. But God's Spirit makes it possible for wimps to be brave.... In Acts 2 the believers were unified; we now should be too; we should quit arguing on picky little things that split us up; we should be civil, because God does not like his family split up. Would you?

Jesus came for all. God gives us gifts for good. At Pentecost we unite.

Tamara Bandstra

If we have faith in Christ the Holy Spirit will dwell in our hearts; when the Holy Spirit dwells within us, it is no longer a "me first" attitude, but an attitude of service to God and others.

Carmen McEwen

Feature

Not exactly a miracle

Lini Richarda Grol

My heart was heavy when I thought of the long weekend on the children's ward. Being short of staff, it would be hectic. But that was nothing. What I really feared was working with Sister H., my supervisor. She was very strict. And I would be the only RN on the ward with her during those busy days. Whatever went wrong would come down on my head — and how!

She threw the keys at me and warned ominously, "If she becomes an addict, it'll be on your conscience."

Don't get me wrong, Sister H. was a fine, dedicated nurse, and I mostly admired her talents. But, oh, was she difficult. And I was not exactly an angel. Furthermore, I was fairly new at this hospital and I didn't yet know all the rules and regulations. Still, I had the feeling that, as our kids often said, "She's always picking on me."

It's on your conscience!

You could say that Sister and I worked in guarded peace. It started when one of my first patients was six-year-old Molly, a frail little girl in the bitter last stages of a very painful bone cancer.

Her doctor had prescribed a dose of morphine for her once every four hours, but he had whispered to me, "Be passionate and lenient with the poor child; give it when she needs it, even if it's not quite four hours."

That day I had bathed Molly, fixed her dressing and had made her bed while distracting her from her pain with stories, games and little songs.

Now, sadly, I had to leave her to see to my other babies, and being alone she would again be more aware of her pain.

When I was at the door she called in a small voice, "Nurse, when can I have a needle?" Her pale face was already crunched up in pain.

"I'll have a look," I said, knowing that she had still 15 minutes to go. But I thought of what the doctor had said and decided to give it to her anyway. By the time I was finished with it, it would be less than 15 minutes, maybe 12... or 10...

Cheerfully I went to Sister H., who was at her desk, "Sister, may I have the key for the drug cupboard?"

Without looking up from her writing she asked, "Why do you need it?"

She knew that I took care of Molly, and she should know that I was asking for the little girl.

"Molly is in agony," I said, irked by her response.

Without a word she took Molly's chart from its slot, looked at it, slammed it back and said calmly, "She has to wait another 15 minutes."

She went back to her work as if I were not there. I bristled, "But the doctor told us to be lenient and not fall over a few minutes when she needs it."

She shrugged, and said without looking up, "He didn't write it down."

Suddenly, turning, and with eyes flashing she said, "And we don't want to make a drug addict of a child."

"ADDICT?" I almost screamed. "The poor child is in her last days, even hours. Do you want her to suffer till, in agony, she dies? Phone the doctor; he'll tell you that she can have it."

We stared at each other with what was almost hatred. She threw the keys at me and warned ominously, "If she becomes an addict, it'll be on your conscience."

Grabbing the keys I snapped, "I can live with that."

I hurried to give Molly the relief she needed and was glad when I saw her relax and again smile up at me. Now content, I could leave her to take care of the other children. Seemingly, I had won the game with Sister. Even so, it bothered me to argue with her, or with anyone.

An unanticipated resolution

This weekend, I knew, would be worse, for though short-staffed, she would demand from the two nursing aids and me that everything be done to perfection. And I would have no one with whom to share the brunt of her ire.

Fervently I prayed, pleading for patience and peace with Sister H. I told the Lord all about my fear and my problem working with her.

Much as I liked my work with the children, this was going to be one long miserable weekend. If only I knew how to manage her — and myself.

The next morning I got up at 5:30 to go to church. At that time of morning the large church was empty except for a dozen people sprinkled throughout the sanctuary. People seemed to want to sit and pray alone, as I did.

I knelt in a pew and folded my hands over my eyes to meditate, blocking out the candlelight and the distractions of the few people straggling in and passing by.

Fervently I prayed, pleading for patience and peace with Sister H. I told the Lord all about my fear, and about my problem working with her.

Suddenly there was a hand on my shoulder and a whisper at my ear, "Do you mind moving over?"

Slightly irked that anyone would disturb my prayer and ask me to make a place in this nearly empty church, I looked up quickly and was startled to see Sister H.

She smiled as I moved over. Then she knelt beside me. Puzzled at her action, I watched her; she, too, hid behind her hands to fully concentrate on her prayer. I thought the Lord must have smiled, for it seemed that we were like two naughty, yet remorseful children kneeling before him, asking for his help while complaining about each other. What a miracle if, that blessed day, we were to become friends.

That didn't exactly happen. But after that time we worked on a more even footing, both trying to see and accept the other's views. We even laughed with each other at our foibles, and shared our concerns.

I will never forget her; nor that day when I prayed for a miracle.

Lini Richarda Grol is a writer and scissor cutting artist living in Holland Christian Homes in Brampton, Ont.

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Evangelist hits 'home runs' for God

Dan Wooding

FORT COLLINS, Col. — As a teenager growing up in St. Catharines, Ont., Ralph Bell, lived for baseball and dreamed of one day hitting a home run for a major league club. But his parents, Archibald and Cecilia Bell, put a "short stop" to his career before it had a chance to take off, and his life went in a completely different direction.

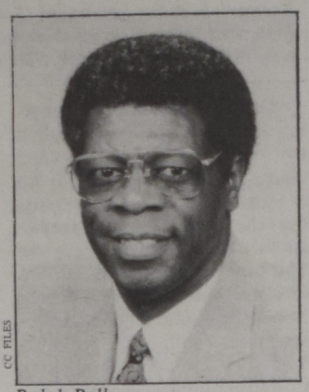
However, in the most surprising of circumstances, Ralph, now 62, did eventually get to bat for the greatest coach in history — Jesus Christ — in the famed "SkyDome," the home venue of the Toronto Blue Jays. For three successive nights in early July 1995, he hit home runs for God during "Mission Ontario."

Dr. Ralph S. Bell's extraordinary experience came about after Billy Graham, who was to conduct a huge crusade in the city's largest stadium, became ill and had to be taken to hospital before the first night's meeting.

"I had come into Toronto to preach in the prisons there," explained Bell as we talked recently in Fort Collins, Colorado. "However, when I got there, I was told that none of them had opened up to me. I was very disappointed and I said, 'Lord, I don't know why I am here.'"

"Then I heard on the radio that Mr. Graham had become ill while speaking at an event. I realized that someone might have to preach for him."

The next morning, this soft-spoken black man, who has been an associate evangelist with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association for more than 30 years, joined other team members for prayer. Shortly after, the local executive committee made the decision that since Ralph Bell, a Canadian citizen, was already there and had been involved in the crusade — and had previously substituted for Graham in Albany, New York — he should be the one to speak for Graham at SkyDome.



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Ralph Bell

'Cold sweats'

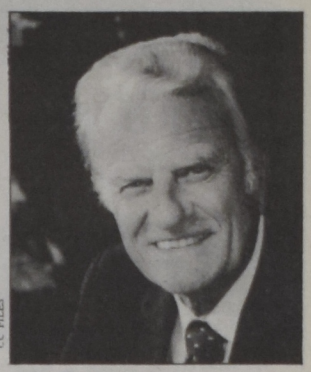
Dr. Bell remembers feeling "cold sweats" as he pondered the possible task ahead of him. "I felt confident in the preaching of the Word, but I was also very nervous about standing in Mr. Graham's stead. People had brought their friends and neighbors to hear Mr. Graham and all of a sudden he would not be there, so I felt a great sense of apprehension. All I knew was that, whatever happened, God would honor his Word."

From his hospital bed at Toronto East Hospital, Graham issued a statement in which he said, "Ralph Bell is one of the great preachers of our time; God is going to use him mightily."

Still, despite this vote of confidence, this local boy, in fear and trepidation, headed for the massive SkyDome.

Ralph Bell need not have worried about preaching to an opening night crowd of about 28,000. "I spoke for three nights and at each one I was told the audience had increased in size," he recalled. "There was a great response. That was thrilling to me. To God be the glory."

He laughs at the irony, that he, a local boy, was "pinch-hitting" in the stadium where the Blue Jays played. "Yes, that's true," he said, "but it was for a different coach!"



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Billy Graham

Record attendance

Graham was able to preach at the last two meetings of the series. During the whole evening, two doctors sat behind Graham in case of medical complications. But they confirmed that the longer he spoke, the more his voice and strength improved.

The crusade achieved what sport could not on this evening; the stadium was completely full with a record 73,500 visitors. Another 10,000 had to be turned away and around 8,000 people that night responded to Graham's invitation to receive Jesus Christ into their lives.

Dan Wooding is a journalist who lives in southern California and is the founder of ASSIST (Aid to Special Saints in Strategic Times).

A refuge for slaves

Dan Wooding

FORT COLLINS,Col. — Ralph Bell's ancestors escaped from the slave trade in the southern United States and came to St. Catharines, Ont., around 1865, perhaps via the Underground Railroad of Harriet Tubman.

His family began attending the African Methodist Episcopal Church that had been established to receive slaves who had come into Canada. "It was in that church that I first heard the gospel about the Lord, though I didn't embrace it at that time," Bell says. "But the first beginnings and first awakening in my heart about my need for a Savior came in that church, so it was a source of refuge for slaves in a physical way and became a source of refuge for me in a spiritual way."

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Jackie Robinson, the first black player in major league baseball.

Bell talked about his early days when he knew he was running from the Lord.

"My dream and goal was to play professional baseball. Jackie Robinson, the first major league black player, was one of my heroes at the time. I also liked Joe DeMaggio, and it was always my dream one day to be like them. I was a second baseman, and then later on played in the outfield. When I was 16, I had been scouted to play and to go into the farm system of the Brooklyn Dodgers. And later on I was scouted again by the St. Louis Cardinals. One of the scouts came and talked with my mother about signing a contract. She listened very carefully and then said, 'No, I'm sorry, my boy can't sign.'"

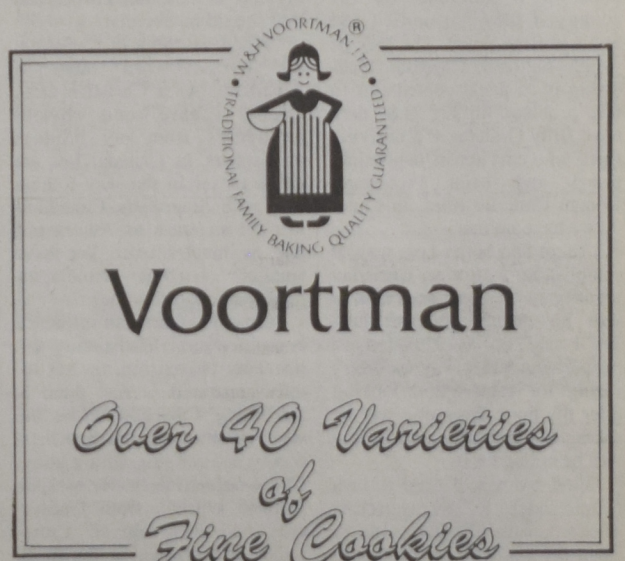
"With those few words she swept out from under me all my hopes and dreams about playing professional baseball," Bell said. "She indicated that I had to finish high school, at least. I felt she was standing in the way of everything I wanted to do. I was the youngest of eight children in my family and I felt like I could provide for her, and I could read about myself in the newspaper and make a lot of money and have fame, fortune and popularity. But she stuck to her guns. Later, when I embraced the gospel and gained some maturity, I told her I really respected that decision, even though I didn't understand it at the time."

Unexpected commitment

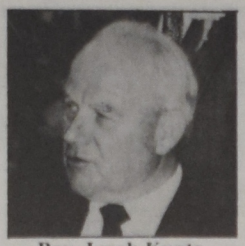
"After that period, some friends invited me to another church across town. I didn't know the pastor or the people and so I didn't have any apprehensions about going; I went and I listened. I enjoyed the music and the singing of the choir and all of that, but when it came to the preaching of the gospel, I hated it — feeling guilty for my sin. Still, when the invitation was given, I responded to the call of God and went forward and gave my life to the Lord. It was at Calvary Associated Gospel Church in St. Catharines, in November of 1954. I was 16."

"I then made some bargains with the Lord that if he would let me play professional baseball, I would have in my contract that I would not play on Sunday and all those kind of things." But it was not to be, and Bell ended up at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago....

The rest is history, as they say.



Church press quotes



Rev. Jacob Kuntz

The identity of Christian Canadians

ChristianWeek *asked a number of Canadian Christians the question: "Is there a Canadian Christian identity?" In the April 1 issue 16 people responded. Here are three responses:*

Maxine Hancock, at Regent College, Vancouver:

"Yes, there is a national Canadian Christian identity. You sense it when you travel internationally. It's only natural and right that any historical group of people would develop an identity that reflects, interprets and affects their particular culture.

"The Canadian Christian identity is marked by a particular openness to each other across denominational and theological lines that is not characteristic everywhere. That's partly because we're few and scattered and have to reach out to each other."

Andrew Grenville of the Angus Reid Group:

"There is no Canadian Christian national identity. For most Canadians, the Christian identity is strictly personal. For the churched it is a matter of local or denominational identity, not Canadian.

"Christians could make much more of a difference in the country if they felt unified and had a unified voice. The lack of visible national, Christian leadership is an acute contributor to this problem. In the U.S. they have Billy Graham as a unifying force who cuts across denominational and even Protestant/Roman Catholic lines. In Canada we have no one.

"There had better be a way of establishing a stronger Christian identity or Canada as a nation will be greatly impoverished. We'll end up as a nation of people wondering why we aren't caring for each other, looking after the poor. Everyone will be asking the question, but no one will be acting on it.

"First we would need to turn people back to the churches. That's a local building block. Then we need to see co-operation instead of competition and suspicion between the churches. We need to recognize more of what we have in common rather than what divides. The common thing is Christ and God's love. Only once we've done that can we hope to really work together and build a national sense of identity.

"A real danger with that national sense of identity is that the line blurs between Christian identity and national identity. Nationalism disguised as Christianity gives faith a bad name."

Andre Laplante, professor at McGill in Montreal:

"Being a Christian implies a heavenly citizenship. I would like to say there is a Canadian Christian national identity, but 'canadian' with a small 'c' and Christian with a capital.

"Christianity in Canada should take on some aspects that are Canadian, not to contaminate it but to demonstrate its local character. Too often however, our Western way of thinking has diluted the gospel and that should be avoided.

"When we think of Canadian, the unsaid word there is American. As a Christian from Quebec I have some obvious differences from my brothers and sisters in Canada, but am much closer in the way I think than with Americans. Canadians are not as brash as Americans, nor as materialistic. We have smaller churches. Americans deal with huge churches.

"Canadian Christian influence is multicultural. Christianity and heavenly citizenship are not totally separated.... Yes, there is something Canadian about the way we live our faith. Christianity is a religion with a body; Christ became flesh. He took on Semitic aspects, from Galilee. God had local flavor. Christianity is a religion in the flesh. Yes, it will take on local flavor."

The Florida boycott

Several churches had urged Canadians not to go to Florida this year (to protest the Helms-Burton law), and instead spend their winter vacation in Cuba. The **Anglican Journal** *of April informs us now that: "Boycott fizzled, Florida tourism is up."*

"Canadians seem to be ignoring the boycott of Florida called by Canadian churches and unions. Tourism was actually up in Florida last year, recent statistics show, and analysts predict another boost this winter season. The boycott had 'no effect' on tourism last year, said Craig Roberts, a public relations representative with the Florida Tourism Industry Marketing Corp. in Toronto. 'It sort of fizzled, to be honest,' he said.

"Florida continues to draw Canadians, Mr. Roberts said, because of its reputation for bargain holidays. With fares like $77 for a one-way ticket, the state expects tourism to increase this year to 1.8 million visitors from Canada. Canadians last year spent $2 billion in Florida.

"'It's pretty hard to resist,' said Mr. Roberts. 'You're up here in the winter, and you think, 'Well, I really support that protest, but we want a winter vacation.' The bottom line is the dollar — the economic value of a trip to Florida.'

"More than a million Canadians visited South Florida last year, a 15 per cent increase from 1995.

"The Florida boycott, announced last August, was launched in response to U.S. policy on Cuba, especially the Helms-Burton law, which reinforces the 30-year old U.S. embargo of Cuba and penalizes foreign corporations and their employees doing business in both Cuba and the U.S."

The April issue of **The Presbyterian Record** *also mentions the U.S. embargo. The editor has much sympathy for the Cuban people.*

"Supporters of the law claim it will tighten the economic embargo on Cuba and 'bring democracy' to the island. Evidence for this remains unconvincing. Despite the best efforts of the Americans to undermine his regime, including an abortive invasion by Cuban-Americans, Fidel Castro has survived eight American presidents. Today, despite the economic suffering of the Cuban people, President Castro seems as secure as he has ever been. In fact, many contend that actions such as the Helms-Burton law only insure his continuance in office.

"The economic embargo seriously affects the lives of ordinary Cubans. Everyday things we take for granted, such as soap and toothpaste, continue in short supply in Cuba. A travel writer in the *Toronto Star* advises visitors to Cuba to take these basics with them to distribute among the people or to give to those who serve them in their hotels."

Catholics of vision

In our time, every denomination has its share of non-conformists. The Roman Catholic Church in Canada also has to face the fact that it has members who are pressing for change.

The **Catholic Register** *of April 7 tells us about a group called "Catholics of Vision." They are circulating "A message to the Canadian Catholic Bishops" in which they are asking for signatures of fellow members. The bishops are opposed to the action. Bishop Tonnos of Hamilton, Ont., writes that such messages and petitions to bishops "are simply not adequate vehicles for capturing the sense of the faithful." These are the changes that are desired:*

"Our vision of a renewed church includes:

1. A church that mirrors the compassion of Jesus in dealing with all people, especially those who are broken and alienated;

2. Increased ecumenical and inter-faith action on behalf of social justice, non-violence and the preservation of the earth;

3. An all-pervading atmosphere of freedom among the people of God;

* freedom for theologians to research, publish and teach without censure,

* freedom to inform and follow one's conscience,

* freedom for priests to be celibate or to marry,

* freedom from discrimination based on sexual orientation,

* freedom of access to the sacraments by divorced and remarried Catholics;

4. Extensive consultation with the Catholic people in developing Catholic teaching on human sexuality;

5. The opening of all church ministries and decision-making bodies to the gifts of all the faithful, including women;

6. The collegial participation of the people of a diocese in the selection of their bishop."

Open letter to Paul Martin

Dr. John Redekop has written an open letter to the Minister of Finance to emphasize fiscal responsibility as "an important part of the Christian ethic" **(Mennonite Brethren Herald** *of March 21). He continues:*

"A second major ethical concern is that it's immoral, in the extreme, to live much beyond our means and then saddle the next generation with a mountain of debt. Christian ethics do not tolerate such unfairness.

"That brings me to my third ethical concern. Why do you, and your associates, so often ridicule those opposition members of Parliament who urge the government to work more diligently at eliminating the deficit and then begin to tackle the debt?

"Your critics make some very valid arguments. When you ridicule what is obviously true and wise, you and your associates only make yourselves look bad. We all remember, of course, that no party other than the Liberals and the Conservatives is responsible for piling up this mountain of loans.

"Finally, I want to stress the point that if you are contemplating tax relief, please practice justice. Don't reduce taxes for the middle and upper classes while ignoring the tax load on the poorer people, and please don't cut back on help for the truly needy just so that you can reduce tax rates for the relatively well-off. Christian ethics dictates that we should first of all consider the plight of the poor."

Jacob Kuntz is a retired Christian Reformed pastor who lives in Brampton, Ont., where he works half-time as chaplain in Holland Chr. Homes.

Classifieds

Classified Rates

(Revised February 1, 1995)

Births $25.00
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c) Photographs sent by fax *are not* acceptable. If you wish a photo included, send us the original.

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- include billing address
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Thank You.

Anniversaries

1972 May 25 1997

With praise and thanksgiving to God we announce and celebrate the 25th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents

HERMAN and HILLY BOLINK
(nee PIETERS)

We thank them for their guidance and love, and pray that God will continue to bless them for many more years.

With love from your children and grandchildren:

Dave & Winny — Edmonton
Robyn, Daniel, Dustin
Len — Lethbridge
Tiffany, Tyler, Trinity

"The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore" (Ps.121:8).

You are invited to an open house in their honor on Friday, May 30, 1997, from 7:30 to 10 p.m., at Sven Ericksens, Mayor Margrath Drive, Lethbridge.

Best wishes only please.

Home address: Box 153, Nobleford, AB T0L 1S0

Wildervank Calgary
1937 May 11 1997

With thanksgiving to God, we announce the 60th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents

ROELF and BOUWINA JONKER
(nee OOSTINGA)

Bert & Anne Jonker — Calgary, Alta.
Randy, David, Mark
Ralph & Nettie Jonker — Delta, B.C.
Mike & Eileen, Rob & Cathy (Amanda), Darryl, Chantal & Eric
Henry & Stien Jonker — Victoria, B.C.
Andrea & John, Brian, Karen

"Even to your old age and gray hairs, I am He, I am He who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will save you" (Is.46:4).

Address: Bethany Home, 916-18A Street NW, Calgary, AB T2W 1C6

Winnipeg Bowmanville
1972 1997

We thank the Lord as on May 20, 1997, we celebrate the 25th anniversary of our parents

HENRY and JANET KNOOP
(nee VAN DER NAGEL)

Lots of love from the thankful children:

Lydia & Chris Bosch — presently living in Guinea, West Africa
Jessica — Grand Rapids, Mich.
David — Toronto, Ont.
James — Bowmanville, Ont.

Home address: 121 Scugog St., Bowmanville, ON L1C 3J3.
Phone: (905)623-6327.

Anniversaries

1957 June 7 1997

God has graciously blessed our parents and grandparents

JOHN and JANE KLOOSTERMAN
(nee DUIKER)

with 40 years of marriage.

May the Lord continue to bless you with many more years of health and happiness. With love from your children and grandchildren,

Carolyn & Bert Geerlings — Thornton
Brent, Sara, Kerry, Megan
Connie & Kevin Kistler — Thornton
Emily, Scott
John & Kim Kloosterman — Thornton
John-Sidney, Virginia, James, Daniel

Home address: R.R.#2, Ivy Road, Thornton, ON L0L 2N0

1947 May 29 1997

We praise and thank the Lord for His abiding faithfulness to our parents and grandparents on their 50th wedding anniversary

PIETER IZEBRAND
and
AUKTJE AURELIA OOSTERHOFF
(nee BOSCH)

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want" (Ps.23:1).

Lies & Ria Rouw
Arleen, Mark, Daniel, Jeremy, Katrina
Ben & Anieta De Boer
Adriana, Valerie, Arthur, Benjamin, Kendrick, Gwendolyn, Kyle, Dorothy, Cassandra
Ray & Aurelia Spronk
Wendell, Damian, Andrew, Raylene, Rianna
Koos & Linda VanderVeen
Peter, Janette, Jonathan, Nolene
Albert & Donna Oosterhoff
Lea-Ann, Dusty
Rayner & Trisha Oosterhoff
Karl, Adrian, Sharene
Clarence & Evelyn Oosterhoff
Kendra, Adam, Chad
Harry & Lori Oosterhoff
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(519) 233-7296 or (519) 482-7862.

Anniversaries

On March 30, 1997, we were able to celebrate the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents

HENRY and LENA SNELTJES
(nee HOEKMAN)

Congratulations Mom and Dad, and we wish you many more years together.

Love from:

Jennifer & Gerald Hoftyzer — Trenton, Ont.
Ben, Alex
Harriet & Rob Frankruyter — Brampton, Ont.
Alaina
Marion & John Heeringa — Oshawa, Ont.
Sharolyn, Ryan
Ron & Patricia Sneltjes — Norval, Ont.
Liana

An open house will be held on Saturday, May 31, 1997, D.V., from 2-4 p.m., in the chapel building at Pleasant Bay Camp (Hwy. 33 south of Trenton, turn right at North Beach Road).

Best wishes only please.

Obituaries

Sept. 12, 1922 - April 28, 1997

On April 28, 1997, God called home His faithful servant

HENRY WILLIAM DEKKER

at the age of 74.

Henry is survived by his loving wife of 40 years, Johanna.

Children:

Mary-Ann & Tom DeVries
Anita & Allan Brown
Gerald & Kimberley Dekker
Henry Dekker Jr.
Son-in-law Richard Siebenga.

Henry was predeceased by his beloved daughter Joyce on June 2, 1992.

Grandpa will be greatly missed by his eight grandchildren, Nathan, Kristen, Amanda, Deanne, Sarah, Alyssa, Julia and Stephanie.

Funeral service was held at West End Chr. Ref. Church, on May 2, 1997, Rev. P. Breedveld officiating. He was a member of the Ottewell Chr. Ref. Church in Edmonton.

"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness'" (Matt.25:21).

Correspondence address:
Johanna Dekker, 10439-21 Ave. NW, Edmonton, AB T6J 5E9

Personal

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Lethbridge, AB T1J 0C7

Obituaries

"Be still and know that I am God" (Ps.46:10a).

In the early morning of April 24, 1997, the Lord took unto Himself, after many months of suffering with cancer, His child

RUTH HOGETERP
(MUIZELAAR)

in her 58th year.

Dear wife of our son and brother, Peter, and dear mother of Jeff and Chris, Debbie and Adely, Pauline and Vince and dear grandmother of 11 grandchildren.

That she suffers no more and is now with her Savior is our comfort.

Daughter-in-law of:
Mrs. Pat Hogeterp — Townsend, Ont.

Sister-in-law of:
Martha & Louis Bill — Jarvis, Ont.
Rose & Mike DeBeer — Jarvis, Ont.
Clarence & Pat Hogeterp — Grand Rapids, Mich.
Hazel & Larry Schipper — Charlottetown, P.E.I.

Correspondence address:
Peter Hogeterp, P.O., Jarvis, ON N0A 1J0

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Ps.91:1).

Suddenly, on April 5, 1997, at his home in Hamilton, Ont.,

JACOB (JACK SR.) KEMPER

went to be with his heavenly Father, in his 81st year.

Beloved husband of Jenny (Askes).

Beloved father of:
Harry & Joanne Kemper — Georgetown, Ont.
Dick & Gail Kemper — Mississauga, Ont.
Albert Kemper — Georgetown, Ont.
Jennie & Jim Antonides — Vineland, Ont.
Jack & Christine Kemper — Huntsville, Ont.
Lynda & Andy Beninger — Wroxeter Ont.
Martin & Judi Kemper — Brampton, Ont.
John & Audrey Kemper — Dundas, Ont.
Henry & Virginia Kemper — Dundas, Ont.
Diane & Charlie Boonstra — Troy, Ont.
Ted & Liz Kemper — Wellandport, Ont.
Nancy & John Jagt — Brantford, Ont.
Paul & Kathy Kemper — Millgrove, Ont.

Beloved Opa of 44 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

Correspondence address:
29 Sister Varga Ter., St. Elizabeth Village, Hamilton, ON L9B 1V2

No issue
will be published
on May 30

Classifieds

Obituaries

Rotterdam Samia
the Neth. Ont.
Feb. 5, 1905 - April 13, 1997

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps. 119:105).

On April 13, 1997,

GRACE (GRIETJE) SCHENK

passed away peacefully at Versa Care Nursing Home in Samia, Ont. Predeceased by her husband Willem Schenk.

Dear mother of:
John & Wilma Schenk — Wyoming, Ont.
Morris & Vicki Schenk — Samia, Ont.
Margurite & Arie Brouwer — Forest, Ont.
William John & Marguerite Schenk — Samia, Ont.
Peter & Tina Schenk — Samia, Ont.

Dear grandmother of 20 grandchildren and 47 great-grandchildren. Also survived by three brothers in the Netherlands. Predeceased by four brothers and one sister.

The funeral service was held on April 16, 1997, at Redeemer Chr. Ref. Church, Samia, Ont., with Rev. N. deKoning officiating.

Correspondence address:
5152 Brigden Rd., Samia, ON N7T 7H3

Losser, Ov. Three Hills, Alta.
April 3, 1915 - May 6, 1997

"In you, O Lord, I have taken refuge; ...Rescue me and deliver me in your righteousness ...for you are my rock and my fortress" (Ps.71:1-3).

GEERTRUI (TRUUS) HOUTMAN (VANDERGENUGTEN)

went to be with her Lord after a long life of service to her family and her church communities.

She is survived by her loving husband Peter, her five children,
Harry & Tine — Toronto, Ont.
Joe & Cherie — Vernon, B.C.
John & Linda — Whitewood, Sask.
Margaret & Gordon Hiebert — Three Hills, Alta.
Bill & Loretta — Balzac, Alta.
15 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Predeceased by her only sibling Jack in 1994.

Correspondence address: Peter Houtman, Box 899, Three Hills, AB T0M 2A0

Job Opportunities

Help Wanted: **Reliable and responsible person to help in farmers' market** in the Toronto area. Fridays and Saturdays from June to October Call for interview **(905) 774-9122** (days) or **(905) 774-7391** (evenings).

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Mr. M. Elzinga
Smithville Covenant Chr. School
6470 Regional Rd. #14
Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

TRENTON, Ont.: Trenton Chr. School invites applications from qualified teachers for a **50% French teaching position** (K-8) effective September 1997. Please send letter of application, resumes, inquiries, etc., to:

Ike Witteveen, Principal
Trenton Chr. School
20 Fourth Ave., Trenton, ON
K8V 5N3
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Fax: (613) 392-6316

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Miscellaneous

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Classifieds

Job Opportunities

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Sarnia is an industrial city located on the southern shores of Lake Huron and the border of Michigan. We are a friendly and active congregation and are looking for the leadership of a balanced and progressive pastor.

Please send inquiries and resume to:
Second CRC Search Committee, c/o Betty Wildschut,
805 Lakeshore Rd., Sarnia, ON N7V 2T7, or phone **(519) 336-0400**, or e-mail: **wilds@mnsi.net**

Job Opportunities

MINISTRY DEVELOPER

The **Clarkson Chr. Ref. Church in Mississauga, Ont.**, has an opening on its pastoral staff for an enthusiastic and qualified **Ministry Developer** to equip its members for outreach; to ensure an effective ministry to youth and young adults; and to enhance the congregation's spiritual life and social interaction. For more information write to:

Clarkson Chr. Ref. Church
1880 Lakeshore Road W., Mississauga, ON L5J 1J7
Fax: (905) 823-5841. Attention: Search Committee

Miscellaneous

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Events

Bowmanville District Chr. School Society
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Open house 6 p.m.; Program 7 p.m.

"As for me and my house we will serve the Lord"
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Miscellaneous

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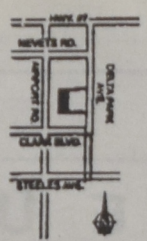

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Events/Classifieds

Events	Events

Calendar of Events

Please submit only brief items. Placement is subject to space availability. Lengthy, multiple-event announcements will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit the material and to charge a nominal, per issue fee per item inserted.

May 16-18 Reformed Engaged Encounter weekend, for couples contemplating engagement or marriage. At Pearce Williams Conference Grounds, **Iona Station,** Ont. Registration/info.: Fred & Doreen Breukelman, (905) 957-4894. (#)

May 21-23 "Trust & Suspicion? - Hermeneutics in a Broken World," a conference hosted by ICS, **Toronto**, Ont. Keynote speakers: James Olthuis, Walter Brueggemann, Phillis Trible and Sylvia Keesmaat. For scholars, teachers, pastors and anyone concerned about how the Bible speaks to the brokenness in our culture. Info.: (416) 979-2331 (#)

May 22-23 "Holland/Canada" piano and organ concerts by Martin Mans and Willem Van Suydam. Both events start at 8 p.m. **May 22:** Covenant CRC, **St. Catharines**, Ont.; **May 23:** Owen Sound Can. Ref. Church, **Owen Sound**, Ont. Admission free! Info.: (905) 631-1929.

May 24 Redeemer College graduation, 2 p.m., at RC, **Ancaster**, Ont. Speaker: Dr. Bill Van Groningen. Come and celebrate!

May 24-25 Open house/opening celebrations of a new place of worship for the Exeter Chr. Ref. Church, **Exeter**, Ont. Info.: (519)235-2990 (#)

May 25 Worship service featuring a performance of the O.T. "Song of Songs," 6 p.m., Clarkson CRC, 1880 Lakeshore Rd. W., **Mississauga**, Ont. Introduction by Dr. Calvin Seerveld. Info.: (905) 823-7262.

May 29 Organ recital by Jonathan Oldengarm, 12 noon, St. Paul's Anglican Church (Bloor & Jarvis), **Toronto**, Ont. Info.: (519) 725-9514.

May 30-31 "Business '97," a conference sponsored by Calvin College and Partners for Chr. Development, Calvin College campus, **Grand Rapids,** Mich. Speakers include: Richard Mouw, Tim Hoeksema, Gaylen Byker, Ray Vanderlaan and others. Registration/Info.: (616) 957-6600 (#).

May 30-June 1 Christian Singles and Singles Again Spring '97 Retreat, Redeemer College, **Ancaster**, Ont. Theme: "Faithful Companionship with Christ." Brochure/info.: (905) 387-1628 after 6 p.m. or e-mail: sbolle@ican.net (#)

June 1 Dutch worship service led by Rev. John G. Klomps, 3 p.m., CRC, **Ancaster,** Ont.

June 2 Organ/trumpet concert, 8 p.m., Redeemer College, **Ancaster**, Ont. Tickets at the door or call (905)648-2131.

June 2-6 Milk & Honey Festival at Redeemer College, **Ancaster**, Ont. Theme: "Heavenly Light on Earthly Matters," with lectures by Dr. Al Wolters and Dr. Henry Brouwer. Visits to St. Jacobs and Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont. Call Janet at (905) 648-2139, ext. 225.

June 3 Golf tournament sponsored by OACS/CCBF at Chippewa Golf & Country Club, **Mount Hope**, Ont. Proceeds to "Christian Curriculum OnLine." Info.: (905)648-3503 (#)

June 4 Organ and oboe recital by Jonathan Oldengarm and Naomi Struik, 12 noon, St. Andrew's Presb. Church, **Kitchener**, Ont. Info.: (519) 725-9514.

June 9-12 "4-Day Evening Walk," Royal Botanical Gardens, **Hamilton/Burlington**, Ont. Info.: (905) 383-6319 (#)

June 18 "Cypress Gardens Winter Ministry (Florida)" picnic, 10 a.m., Southside Park, **Woodstock**, Ont. Info.: (519) 475-4946.

June 29 Organ recital by Jonathan Oldengarm, 12 noon, St. Paul's Anglican Cathedral, **London**, Ont. Info.: (519) 725-9514.

Spring Concert

by the **Con Spirito Choir** (John Kaldeway, director; Michele Anjema, piano; Joy Wilpstra, organ) and the **Clarkson CRC Choir** (Laurens Kaldeway, director; Carolyn Kingma, piano).

Saturday, May 31, 1997, at 7:30 p.m., Clarkson CRC, 1880 Lakeshore Road W., Mississauga, Ont.

Tickets $5/$13.50 fam. *Proceeds to Clarkson CRC Organ Fund*

Hollandse Dag in York, Ont.

Op D.V. **woensdag 28 mei, 10 v.m.**, wordt de **29ste Hollandse Dag** in York gehouden en U bent uitgenodigd.

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Voor lunch wordt gezorgd.

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Bill would restrict religious freedom in Israel

Israeli embassies feel pressure against anti-evangelism proposal

TEL AVIV, Israel (EP, with files by Roxanne Rupke) — It's difficult to communicate the gospel in the land of Jesus' birth, and it may become even harder. The Israeli Knesset is currently considering a bill that would severely restrict religious freedom.

The proposed law would make it illegal to possess, print, copy, distribute, import or otherwise make public "materials containing persuasion or enticement to convert," according to CC Media Review, an Israeli news review service. A person who violated the law would be punished with one year in prison.

The bill was introduced as a private member's bill by Nisim Zvili of the Labor Party and Moshe Gafni of Torah Judaism after failing to win support from the government committee representing the ruling coalition in the Knesset, says Baruch Binah, minister-counselor for public and inter-religious affairs at the Israeli Embassy in Washington, D.C.

Bill S757-1996 must be approved by a majority of the full 120-member Knesset in order to become law, but Binah insists that without endorsement from leaders in the ruling coalition, the proposal has only a remote chance of success. The coalition committee rejected the bill twice, Binah says. "I'm pretty sure they simply looked at it and decided it's a bill that shouldn't pass. While we don't welcome proselytizing, it's not illegal."

Orchestrated response?

Binah admits that Jews in Israel generally resist evangelism and are even personally offended by it at times; but Israel has laws protecting free speech, after all. To validate such a law as the proposed one legislators would have to change laws already on the books.

Baruch Maoz, a Messianic Jewish pastor who is helping rally forces against the bill, dismisses those statements from Israel's Foreign Ministry. He says the embassies are simply "seeking to orchestrate a response that will lull protesters into believing that their concern has been addressed and appropriately resolved."

According to Maoz, reactions to the proposal are being expressed to Israeli embassies all over the world. An example: 7,000 signatures on a protest letter have been given to the Israeli ambassador in Finland. The governments of Norway and Denmark are also questioning the bill.

Maoz says the Israeli government's press office has reported 78 out of 120 Knesset members as supporting the bill. He charges that some of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's own staff have publicly backed it. Without diplomatic pressure from outside Israel, Netanyahu will be unwilling to take a stance against the law, since he depends on the Jewish Orthodox minority that backs the law to preserve his governing coalition.

Recent incidents already show effects of the proposed law, Maoz asserts. For example, a believer in Eilat recently received a ticket for distributing religious literature. Maoz reports an illegal search warrant was issued which allowed police to enter the believer's home and confiscate religious literature — a crime nowhere mentioned in Israeli statute books.

'Flagrant violations'

"Conceivably, this bill could be used to outlaw any Christian or Messianic literature, including the New Testament," Cindy Osborne of CC Media Review explained to *Christian Courier*.

In late January, a Haifa weekly ran a story on Messianic Jewish groups which were distributing tracts among the city's youth. The tracts described various Jewish heroes who gave their lives for Israel, then told about Jesus giving his life for all of humanity. Municipal and religious authorities were upset by the evangelism, asserting that the missionaries are targeting minors and were "in flagrant violation of the law."

The Tel Aviv-centred national daily reported on January 26 that Israel's Ministry of Education was placing the children of Ethiopian immigrants in a special school to learn the basics of Judaism. Activists from the Ethiopian community called this apartheid and demanded that the children be integrated into regular schools.

The Education Ministry's spokesperson replied that the situation was temporary; however, he could not explain why children of foreign workers and expatriates are immediately placed in regular schools.

On February 6, a Jerusalem religious daily which is openly hostile to Christian groups reported on the "well-oiled propaganda machine" of a certain mission organization in Israel. This organization, the article claimed, has unlimited resources and a budget of over $100 million (US). The article included a map pinpointing regions where missionaries are active, and stated that some evangelists disguise themselves as orthodox Jews.

Wake-up call

The paper hoped the report would increase public support for a proposed law to make it illegal to influence a person toward changing his or her religious affiliation.

The proposed law has Christians in Israel concerned. "Please pray that the mere threat of this law would be enough of a wake-up call for us here in Israel," Osborne says, "and that it will bring the Good News to the attention of all Israelis who need to hear."

New religious restrictions stalled in Russian parliament

Lawrence A. Uzzell

MOSCOW (Keston) — The push to repeal Russia's 1990 law on freedom of conscience is at least temporarily bogged down. Confirming the latest of many postponements, a source in the Duma's committee on religion told Keston News Service on April 11 that there would definitely not be a bill ready for the committee's formal consideration until sometime in May. A source in the executive branch thinks that the current stalemate would continue for the rest of the year.

Sundry proposals

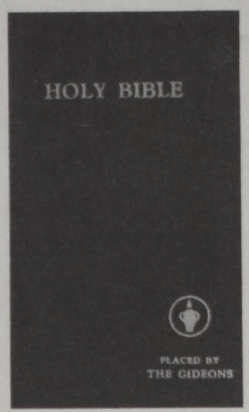
While an informal working group convened by the Duma committee has supposedly reached consensus, new amendments continue to be proposed by groups which do not have representatives in the working group — and even by some which do.

A group of activists opposing "totalitarian sects" wants to create a new state agency to monitor religious life in Russia, while others fear that this could turn into a new version of the repressive Council for Religious Affairs of the Soviet period. Deputies from Vladimir Zhirinovsky's ultra-nationalist Liberal Democratic Party want the law to specify four "traditional religions" as entitled to special advantages: the Orthodox, Muslims, Jews and Buddhists.

Yet another proposal would radically revamp the procedural rules for registration of churches. It would authorize the secular authorities not merely to analyze the application form and other documents submitted by a new religious group seeking registration, as they already do, but also to mount a police-type investigation into the group's actual activities. One version of this proposal would give the authorities as long as 25 years to decide whether to grant full-fledged registration.

Bibles confiscated in Uzbekistan:

threat of Bible Society closure



An increasingly banned book.

TASHKENT, UZBEKISTAN (Keston) — The Bible Society of Uzbekistan, officially registered in Tashkent in 1994, was informed on April 8, 1997, by the Ministry of Justice that a consignment of 24,960 New Testaments in the Uzbek language, printed in Moscow, had been detained by customs officers at the Shumilov station in Tashkent in January and confiscated.

Distributing such books would be regarded as "missionary activity," which is forbidden by law in Uzbekistan. The Bible Society was given one month to respond, and has been told that if it persists in distributing Scriptures in Uzbek it will be closed down. The Bible Society is contesting this ruling, arguing that the distribution of the Scriptures does not constitute missionary activity. Bibles are being made available only to people who specifically request them.

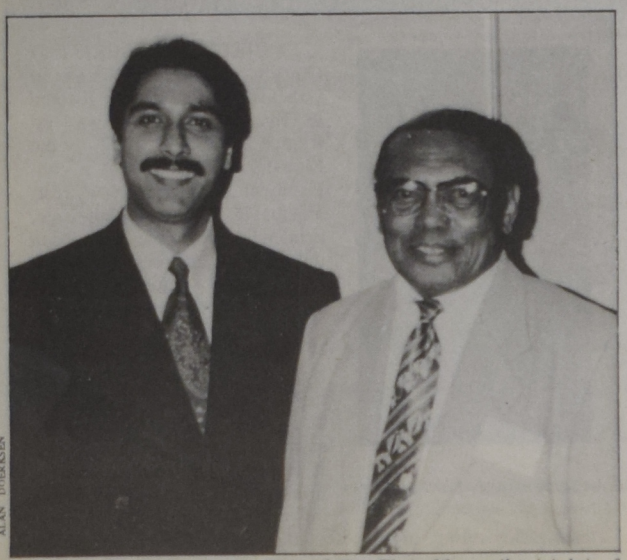
Allowed almost everywhere

An appeal is being sent to President Karimov, asking him to lift the embargo on the grounds that the Bible Society does not engage in the proselytism of Muslim believers, but seeks rather to make available to all a book, the sacred character of which is many times referred to in the Holy Quran.

Governments and civil rights organizations in many countries are being approached by the United Bible Societies and by its member societies. The societies are requesting that they urge the president and government of Uzbekistan to allow the people free access to the Bible.

This is a right which is exercised in almost every country in the world, including such predominantly Muslim countries as Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Tunisia and Turkey.

International agency supports native church-planters in Asia



ALAN DOERKSEN

Norendra Singh (left) of India and Dr. Chris Marantika (right) of Indonesia are supported by Partners International.

Alan Doerksen

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — Most mission agencies send missionaries trained in Canada or another developed country to serve in a developing country. But Partners International takes a different approach by encouraging national missionaries and church leaders, especially in Asia, to plant churches in their native countries.

Partners has several reasons for its approach to missions. National missionaries share the same culture as others in their country, and therefore are often readily accepted by the people to whom they minister. They also share the same language and therefore don't require years of language training before starting their work.

In financial terms, donations sent to Partners are stretched considerably because national missionaries are paid at local rates, at an average of $2,000 (Cdn) annually for a full-time worker.

Another reason for Partners' approach is that some countries are now inaccessible to expatriate missionaries because of restrictive laws.

Steady increase

Partners has seen good results from its approach to mission work. The agency now supports 3,300 national missionaries in more than 50 countries. According to its Canadian office, workers supported by the agency are starting a new church every 15 hours, somewhere in the world.

Partners was started in 1943 as the China Native Evangelistic Crusade (CNEC), and first focused on reaching China with the gospel. But after the Communist Party took control there, the agency was forced to move, and began working in Hong Kong and other parts of Southeast Asia, where its work is now concentrated.

Recently, two Christian leaders from India and Indonesia visited Canada to report to Canadian supporters on the results of their church-planting work. Dr. Chris Marantika, founder of the Evangelical Theological Seminary of Indonesia (ETSI) spoke at a fundraising evening in St. Catharines Ont. in early May about the work his seminary has been doing.

Countless villages

Marantika explained how in 1975 he had received a vision to plant a church in every village in Indonesia. "God intentionally made me forget to count the villages," he noted, but later he found out that there are 67,000 villages in Indonesia.

Although he had a vision, he lacked the resources to accomplish this enormous task by himself, so Marantika approached Partners with his idea. With the support of Partners, Marantika started ETSI in 1979.

The vision of the seminary is to train evangelists and church planters to reach all of Indonesia with the gospel in one generation. Marantika has a strategy to accomplish this, which he calls "Indonesia 1:1:1." This refers to his goal of starting one church in each village in Indonesia in one generation. Each student at the seminary is required to plant at least one church of 30 baptized believers before he or she can graduate.

"Now 1400 churches have been planted by 1,100 graduates," reported Marantika. In the past 20 years, the number of Christian churches in Indonesia has increased from 20,000 to 40,000, he said. "We know our responsibility is to spearhead the movement."

Muslim backlash

But the rapid expansion of churches has not come without problems. Muslims are the largest religious group in Indonesia and have caused trouble for Christians there. Marantika asserted that his life has been threatened by Muslims, and during the most recent month of Ramadan, he and his family were forced to go into hiding. "Our lives are in danger all the time," he said.

Last October, Muslim extremists destroyed 20 churches in East Java, Indonesia. In one church, a pastor, his wife and three church members burned to death. Most of these churches were planted by graduates of ETSI.

Eight graduates of ETSI, seven of whom have each planted a church, attended the recent St. Catharines meeting. They are members of the musical group The Visionaires, and performed several Christian songs featuring bamboo angklung instruments.

Outreach in India

Rev. Norendra Singh, a pastor from Rajasthan, in northern India, who is now studying at an American seminary in Kentucky, also spoke about his involvement with church planting work in India. As a teenager, Singh had been involved with drugs and gangs, but he became a Christian at age 17.

Recently, Singh and other Christian leaders in northern India have focused on reaching the Bhil tribe. Fifteen years ago, Singh met a paralysed Bhil woman whose husband was an alcoholic. "God led us to his family," says Singh. He and others prayed for the woman, and she regained the ability to walk. "This became a tremendous witness," explains Singh.

Since that time, eight churches have been started among the Bhil people, and the husband of the woman who was paralysed is now a church elder.

Singh and his associates in northern India also operate a radio ministry, and Singh's wife has participated in this by singing Christian songs in Hindi.

Although only 2.6 per cent of Indians are Christians, Singh is encouraged by the church growth he has seen in northern India. "God is using his living word.... the Spirit of God is moving miraculously," he says.

Singh, Marantika and The Visionaires are currently on a two-month fundraising tour across Canada.

COURTESY PARTNERS INTERNATIONAL

The Visionaires, a musical group from Indonesia who play bamboo instruments. Most members of the group have also started churches.

News Digest

North Korean government snubs world

TOKYO — Although North American relief agencies have sent grain shipments to those starving in North Korea, the communist government has been alienating other governments and wasting money, according to an Associated Press report.

Dean Hirsch, president of World Vision International, recently visited North Korea and was surprised by preparations to mark the anniversary of the founding of its military. "I couldn't help but wonder how this event would be seen by the people in the light of the scarcity of food in the country," said Hirsch.

New British PM is a Christian

SEDGEFIELD, Eng. — Tony Blair, the new Labour Prime Minister of Britain, has a Christian basis to his politics, according to a *Toronto Star* report. Biographer John Rentoul says the critical moment in Blair's life may have been his confirmation in the Church of England at age 20, while at Oxford. "The importance of this event in understanding him cannot be underestimated," says Rentoul. "He became a Christian and a socialist at the same time."

Blair even discussed with friends the prospect of joining the ministry, says Rentoul, but decided instead to pursue his ethical commitment "to make a difference" through politics.

Blair's wife, Cherie Booth Blair, is Catholic, and the Blair family regularly attends Catholic mass in Sedgefield.

Successor to Mother Teresa was Hindu

CALCUTTA, India — A Hindu convert to Christianity has been elected to succeed Mother Teresa of Calcutta as leader of the Missionaries of Charity. Sister Nirmala, 63, is believed to have been the only Indian on the shortlist of candidates to take over as superior general. In charge of the order's Contemplative Wing since 1979, she was born in the state of Bihar of a military family with a Nepalese background. Sr. Nirmala was not one of the front-runners to succeed Mother Teresa and was not her personal choice as a successor.